THE MINISTRY OF DEACONESSES

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CECILIA ROBINSON, 1868-1903
DEACONESS, 1894

THE MINISTRY OF DEACONESSES

BY

DEACONESS CECILIA ROBINSON

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
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SECOND EDITION
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TO

ISABELLA GILMORE

HEAD DEACONESS OF THE DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER

FROM WHOM MANY HAVE LEARNT

TO UNDERSTAND AND TO DESIRE

THE OFFICE AND WORK OF A DEACONESS

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INTRODUCTION

SIXTEEN years ago I was allowed to prefix to the First Edition of this little book a short Introduction calling attention to its character and purpose, to the opportuneness of its publication, and to the special qualifications with which Deaconess Cecilia Robinson was equipped for the task of writing it. A few years later she passed from her long illness to her rest, leaving as an heritage to us who had known and loved her an example of simple, straightforward devotion, of thoughtful capacity, and above all of a holy and beautiful life whose value it would be difficult to exaggerate and impossible to forget. When the work of English Deaconesses has come, as it some day will, to be appreciated and extended throughout the Church, her name

will be held in peculiar reverence for her wise and forceful furtherance of a sacred cause in the early days of its revival.

When I tried in 1898 *to summarise the then facts and to forecast the future, I certainly believed that before sixteen years had come and gone we should be able to chronicle a wider, a steadier, and a more conspicuous advance both in England and across the seas. Come it will. The retarding conditions have been accidental, and I think they have been temporary. We are strengthening our stakes. We shall lengthen our cords. I find nothing to alter in what I wrote at that time:*

'Of the great place which Deaconess life will take hereafter in the Church of England I have myself no doubt whatever. The principles on which it rests are so sound, so reasonable, so Scriptural and Apostolic, and accord so truly with the character of our English Church, that, once rightly under-

stood, they are bound to win their way and to bear fruit. Though the harvest tarry it will come at length.'

This Edition, corresponding in the main with its predecessor, contains information as to what has been happening in the intervening years, and its new chapters are the outcome of ripe experience and skilled observation in England, in the United States, and in the Mission field.

When the next Lambeth Conference meets the subject must again be handled by the whole Episcopate of our Church, with the help of more ample material than earlier Conferences had at their disposal. It will then be apparent how much we owe to the wisdom, the patience and the devotion of the brave women who are now the leaders of this work. They have found help, as I have, in a recognition of the high expectancy which Deaconess Cecilia entertained for the future of the Order to which she gave her life. Sharing those hopes

and prayers, I again commend her clear and telling pages to all who have at heart the gentle ministry of women in the Church of God, a ministry which was blessed and fostered in His earthly years by the Church's living Lord.

RANDALL CANTUAR:

LAMBETH,
Whitsuntide, 1914.

PREFACE

IN sending out this book I desire to guard against a possible misunderstanding. My first object has been to trace the history of the office of Deaconess back to its beginning, in order to discover the mind of the Church with regard to it in primitive times. The result of this enquiry seems to justify us in placing the Deaconess among the ordered ministers of the Church. But when we thus claim for her a share in the Diaconate, it must always be understood that we refer to that Order as it existed in Apostolic and primitive days, when the Deacon was simply what his name implies — the servant of the Church—and not, as he has practically come to be regarded, merely a candidate for the Priesthood. We would claim for the Deaconesses of the Anglican Church the position which their predecessors held in the first six centuries of the Christian era. What that position was this book endeavours to show.

I have sought, in the second place, to plead

for the full restoration and recognition of the Order, not simply because it is primitive, but because it meets a great need of the Church to-day. Not only is the supply of Clergy not keeping pace with the demands of our rapidly increasing population, but statistics show that there is at this moment even a decrease in the yearly number of those who are ordained. Whatever may be the explanation of this fact, it would seem to show that some other agency is needed to supplement the regular ministry. Would not the service rendered by Deaconesses go far to supply this want? As we look upon the half empty Churches in many of our great town parishes, we cannot but feel that what we need is not so much more buildings and more services, but more 'Servants of the Church,' who will go among the people, and take the Church to them when they will not come to the Church: messengers who will go out into our modern 'highways and hedges,' the streets and slums, and 'compel them to come in.' And this is the mission of the Deaconess, which the gifts of her womanhood, strengthened by training, and crowned with the Church's consecration, specially fit her to fulfil.

No one can regret more sincerely than the writer the imperfect way in which she has per-

formed the task entrusted to her. She sends it forth in the earnest hope that in spite of its deficiencies, it may serve to call further attention to an important subject, and that it may lead some of her sisters to offer themselves for this high and holy calling. How glad and blessed its service is, she rejoices to be allowed to bear witness.

This book owes very much to the pioneer investigations of Dean Howson, to whose learned and persistent advocacy of their cause, Deaconesses are so deeply indebted. If evidence adduced by him has here been modified or passed over in silence, this is due to the fact that the present writer has been in a position to avail herself of more recent enquiries in the domain of Early Church History and Literature.

Another book which has been consulted with great advantage is 'Woman's Work in the Church,' by Dr J. M. Ludlow, Barrister-at-Law. His account of the early Deaconesses is remarkably free from the common confusions, and his treatment of the legal evidence gives a permanent interest to a work, which, unfortunately, is little known, and cannot easily be obtained.

In conclusion, I desire to acknowledge with loving thanks the debt I owe to my brother for the generous help he has given me in this work.

He is responsible only for that portion of it which bears his name, but to his patient research and careful criticism is due all that is of value in the earlier chapters of the book.

CECILIA ROBINSON

Deaconess.

DIOCESE OF ROCHESTER
1898.

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CHAPTER I

THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE Order of Deaconesses rests its claim to the recognition of the Church upon Apostolic authority. A history of the Order, therefore, must begin by asking how far this claim is justified by the testimony of Scripture. And first we must try to understand the exact meaning of the title which was conferred upon these ministering women by an Apostle. The name Deaconess comes from a Greek word which occurs very frequently in the New Testament. *Diakonia*, as well as its corresponding verb *diakonein*, is used to describe various kinds of service. The other word constantly applied to servants is *doulos*, which means literally, a slave. The Revised Version distinguishes between these two by rendering *doulos* into English as 'servant,' while it translates *diakonos* by the word 'minister.' There are one or two exceptions to this rule, the most noteworthy one being that in which the word *diakonos* is used of Phoebe,

where the Revised Version has retained the old translation of 'servant,' though giving the alternative 'Deaconess' in the margin.[1] In its simplest and most literal meaning *diakonia* had reference to the supply of bodily wants, and it is in this sense that the Apostles use it when they speak of 'serving tables' (*diakonein trapezais*).[2] But it frequently has a wider meaning, and includes every kind of service, whether temporal or spiritual. Our Lord uses it of Himself when He says, 'the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto (*diakonêthênai*), but to minister (*diakonêsai*);' and again, 'I am among you as he that serveth.'[3] It is applied also to the ministry of the angels, both to our Lord, and to His Church.[4] S. Paul uses it constantly in speaking of himself and his fellow workers, applying it both to the 'ministry of the word,' and to the supply of temporal needs. And in the Gospels this word is used to describe the loving service rendered by women to the Master and His disciples. S. Mark says of S. Peter's mother-in-law, that when healed by Christ she made use of her restored vigour in ministering (*diêkonei*) to Him.[5] Twice is the word used of

Rom. xvi. 1. The other exceptions are found in Matt. xxii. 13; and John ii. 5, 9, and xii. 26.

[2] Acts vi. 2.

[3] Matt. xx. 28; Luke xxii. 27.

[4] Matt. iv. 11; Heb. i. 14.

[5] Mark i. 31.

Martha,[1] whose over anxiety in 'much serving' (*pollên diakonian*) on one occasion drew forth a gentle rebuke from the Master. S. Luke gives the names of several of these women, who 'ministered unto Him of their substance,'[2] and both S. Matthew and S. Mark allude to their service in similar terms.[3] The word, which was thus consecrated by its association with our Lord, came to be used generally of all service, whether high or humble, rendered to the Church. It was only after the lapse of some considerable time, when the need arose of organising and defining the different kinds of service which the Church required, that the word *diakonia* became restricted to a special form of ministry, and those to whom such service was entrusted, whether men or women, were called 'Deacons.'

We have now to trace the first beginnings out of which this order of Deacons grew, as we find them in the New Testament. We must not look for any definite statements with regard to the office at this early stage of the Church's history. It would be unnatural to expect to find fully developed organisation in an infant society. The Institutions of the Church were not given to her ready made, but were developed gradually on

[1] Luke x. 40; John xii. 2.
[2] Luke viii. 1-3.
[3] Matt. xxvii. 55; Mark xv. 41.

certain great principles, in response to the needs of her corporate life. So we shall not hope to do more than discover the general outlines of a ministry, which became fully matured at a later period of the Church's history. And this is what, at the very outset, we do find.[1] The Church from the beginning recognised the duty of caring for the temporal wants of her poorer members, and in Jerusalem these were provided for by a common daily meal. As the number of the Christians increased, the Apostles saw the need of appointing special officers to take charge of this department. They could not themselves leave the ministry of the Word in order to 'minister to tables.' But the work was important; and the more so as the neglect of it was threatening the unity of the Church. So they delegated this ministry to seven specially chosen men, 'full of the Spirit and of wisdom.' These men are nowhere called Deacons, though their appointment may be regarded as creating the office; and their service proved so necessary that it reappeared when further communities were founded, and that in circumstances often widely different from those which had given it birth.

We have next to consider to what extent the Church made use of the service of women. We

[1] Acts vi.

cannot fail to observe at once the remarkable degree of activity shown by the first Christian women. The position they occupy, and the influence they exercise is without a precedent in the history of the world up to that time. Heathen religions had their priestesses and vestal virgins, but they afforded little scope for the work of women generally. Nor did the Jewish Church allow them a share in its ministry. Here and there a striking figure stands out, a Deborah or a Huldah, raised by her unique personality, in spite of her sex, to a position of great influence. But this was the exception, and in our Lord's time the status of woman was so low, that His disciples marvelled when they found Him talking to a woman,[1] knowing that the religious teachers of the day would have counted it a disgrace to be seen doing so. It was, therefore, one of the most notable features of the Christian religion that it assigned to women a high place in the life and work of the Church. From the first we are struck by the prominent position which they occupy. We have seen them ministering to our Lord, who owned and consecrated their service, and rewarded it with a service higher still. For to them He entrusted the duty of announcing the great fact of the Resurrection even to the Apostles themselves,

[1] John iv. 27 (R.V.).

thus making them 'the first depositaries of the hope which was to regenerate the world.' And the departure of the Lord causes no break in the continuity of their service. The ministry which His human body no longer needed was henceforth to be offered to Him through His Body, the Church. Though their definite work may not begin at once they have their part in prayer from the beginning S. Luke tells us that in the days which followed the Ascension the Apostles continued 'stedfastly in prayer, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren,'[1] waiting for the fulfilment of the promise, that alike upon sons and daughters should be poured out the spirit of prophecy.[2] And as we follow the history of the infant Church, in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles, we notice again and again the important place occupied by women. They are at work in all the great centres of the Church's life. At Jerusalem, we cannot doubt that the women whose devotion our Lord had inspired continued their labour of love; and it is there that we meet with Mary the mother of Mark, whose house seems to have formed a centre for worship.[3] Even the painful story of Sapphira proves the share which women had in the corporate life of the Church; for S. Peter holds her equally re-

[1] Acts i. 14. [2] Acts ii. 17. [3] Acts xii. 12.

sponsible with her husband for the religious fraud which they had tried to practise on the community.

In other parts of Palestine also, women are at work. Dorcas, 'full of good works and almsdeeds,' constitutes herself the patroness of the 'widows' at Joppa,[1] and the four virgin daughters of Philip the Evangelist, at Cæsarea, all possess the gift of prophecy.[2] This power, which S. Paul ranks first among the spiritual gifts he would have his converts desire, seems to have been frequently bestowed upon women,[3] and after a time to have given rise to disorders which led the Apostle to discourage its public exercise by them.[4]

When the Church was planted for the first time in Europe, the Gospel found in women its earliest adherents. S. Paul had reached Philippi, a Roman colony, and S. Luke tells us that his first audience was composed of a small company of women, who had met for prayer by the riverside, and that Lydia, a 'seller of purple,' a woman evidently of wealth and importance, was won for Christ with her household.[5] S. Paul, in his epistle to the Philippians, mentions the names of two other women belonging to this Church—Euodia and Syntyche—of whom he says, 'they laboured with

[1] Acts ix. 36. [2] Acts xxi. 9. [3] 1 Cor. xi. 5.
[4] 1 Cor. xiv. 34. [5] Acts xvi. 14.

me in the Gospel.' Unhappily their work was marred and the peace of the Philippian Church endangered by their disagreements. The Apostle pleads with them 'to be of the same mind in the Lord.'[1] In the neighbouring cities of Thessalonica and Berœa, it is specially noted by S. Luke that the converts to Christianity included 'many Greek women of honourable estate.'[2]

And in the imperial city itself, women are already at work. S. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, salutes four of these workers:—'Mary, who bestowed much labour upon you;' 'Persis, the beloved, who laboured much in the Lord;' 'Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord.'[3]

It is, perhaps, hardly to be wondered at if, in the enthusiasm of their new-found freedom for service, we see women in some places over-stepping the natural limits of their sex, and assuming functions for which they were not intended. This seems to have been specially the case at Corinth, a Church which gave S. Paul much trouble by its disorderly conduct. Here women would appear to have taken a prominent part in the public worship, and to have done so with their heads uncovered. The Apostle checks such innovations sharply, saying, 'We have no such custom, neither the

[1] Phil. iv. 2. [2] Acts xvii. 4, 12. [3] Rom. xvi. 6, 12.

Churches of God.'[1] But if this Church is unhappily notorious for its lack of order, it has also the honour of numbering among its members two of the most remarkable women of the Apostolic age—Priscilla and Phoebe. The former we find also at work with her husband at Ephesus and Rome; but they spent some time at Corinth, and S. Paul made his home with them during his long stay there. He speaks of them with deep gratitude saying, that for his sake they had 'laid down their own necks.' That Priscilla, or Prisca as she is called elsewhere, must have occupied an exceptional position seems to be implied in the rather curious fact that four out of the six times that she is mentioned her name is placed before that of her husband. Twice we read of 'the Church which is in their house;' 'all the Churches of the Gentiles' are spoken of as their debtors; and it was from them that the gifted teacher Apollos learnt 'the way of God more carefully.'[2]

Phoebe also belonged to the Corinthian Church, and we learn what is known of her from S. Paul himself. Writing to the Roman Christians he says, 'I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant (*diakonos*) of the Church[3] that is at

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 16.

[2] Acts xviii. 2, 18, 26; Rom. xvi. 3-5; 1 Cor. xvi. 19; 2 Tim. iv. 19.

[3] The *Vulgate* reads: 'in ministerio ecclesiae.

Cenchreæ: that ye receive her in the Lord, worthily of the saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever matter she may have need of you: for she herself also hath been a succourer of many, and of mine own self.'[1] This is the only instance in the New Testament in which the word *diakonos* is explicitly used of a woman, and it is valuable as proving that women as well as men had a recognised share in the ministry of the Church. Bishop Lightfoot remarks: 'As I read my New Testament, the female diaconate is as definite an institution as the male diaconate. Phoebe is as much a deacon as Stephen or Philip is a deacon.'[2] And Dean Howson adds that 'the case might with strict accuracy have been stated more strongly, for Stephen and Philip are nowhere designated by this term, whereas Phoebe is expressly so designated.'[3] We are, however, hardly justified in assuming that S. Paul uses the word here in a strictly official sense. There is no indication up to this point of any definite organisation of the three orders of the ministry; there is on the other hand, evidence of a lack of it in the Corinthian Church. We have already noted in what widely differing senses *diakonia* is used, and to how many people it is applied. In this same Church S. Paul speaks

[1] Rom. xvi. 1, 2.
[2] *Primary Diocesan Charge.*
[3] *Diaconate of Women*, p. 33.

of the *diakonia* of Stephanas and his household in a way which seems to show that the word had not as yet acquired a technical meaning,[1] but might be used of 'everyone that helpeth in the work and laboureth.' But whether or not Phoebe ever received the title of Deaconess in an official sense, she was certainly fulfilling the functions of one, and may rightly be regarded as the spiritual ancestress of the Deaconess of later times. S. Paul's notice of her, though brief, tells us something both of her character and history. Cenchreæ, her place of work, was a harbour situated some eight or nine miles from Corinth. In this great city S. Paul had spent over eighteen months. Phoebe was probably one of his converts, and exercised her *diakonia* in the crowded streets of its port under his supervision. She may have formed one of a band of such ministering women, another perhaps being Chloe, who seems to have been of note in the Corinthian Church.[2] Phoebe must have known Priscilla, and doubtless often made one of the little group of Christians who met in her house to receive the Eucharist, and listen to the teaching of the great Apostle. She was probably a woman of rank and means, for S. Paul speaks of her as 'a succourer (or, as it may perhaps be translated, 'a patroness')

[1] 1 Cor. xvi. 15, 'who have set (*or* appointed) themselves to *diakonia* of the Saints.

[2] 1 Cor. i. 11.

of many, and,' he adds, 'of mine own self.' What special service she rendered him we are not told; but like Priscilla, she seems to have enjoyed his friendship and possessed the privilege of ministering to his wants. When we read of Phoebe, however, she is leaving Cenchreæ, and setting out for Rome, bound apparently on some business errand in the imperial city. A tradition, which however cannot claim early evidence on its behalf, makes her the bearer of S. Paul's epistle to the Romans.

It was women such as Phoebe and Priscilla who created the ideal of the female diaconate. Whether or no they received the name as an official title matters but little; they certainly 'executed the office' of a Deaconess, and bore splendid testimony to the value of a ministry of women. When the time for definite ecclesiastical organisation came, the work of women had become a necessity to the Church, and they received at once their place in her ordered ministry. We have proof of this within the New Testament itself. S. Paul, at the close of his life, looks forward to the time when the Church would require a regular ministry. In writing to Timothy he gives directions as to the officers of the Church at Ephesus.[1] These seem to have been divided into two classes—Bishops and Deacons—

[1] 1 Tim. iii.

though the words had, perhaps, at that time the more general sense of overseers and servants. After describing the qualifications of a Bishop, the Apostle continues: 'Deacons in like manner must be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre (that is, 'of petty gains'), . . . women in like manner must be grave, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.' Clearly the reference here, as almost all commentators now agree, is to the women-deacons, and not, as the Authorised Version (made at a time when the office of Deaconess had been lost sight of by the Church) translates, the 'wives' of the Deacons. 'It should be particularly noticed,' says Dean Howson, 'that in the early part of the chapter, no such directions are given concerning the wives of the Bishops, though they are certainly quite as important as the wives of the Deacons.[1] We have in fact here the Man-Deacon and the Woman-Deacon co-ordinated side by side, in the same general ministry, just as we find to be the case afterwards in the post-apostolic age.'[2] Thus, though no individuals are mentioned, we may conclude that the official ministry of women was an established fact in the Church of Ephesus; and

[1] *Deaconesses*, p. 57.
[2] *The Diaconate of Women*, p. 33.

we learn further, from the directions concerning them, something of what their work would be. The qualifications required of both the men and women Deacons refer to character, rather than to fitness for special duties. Their lives must be simple and well-disciplined, commending the faith which they profess. But it is not required of them as of the Bishop, that they should be 'apt to teach' or able to rule. Their mission is to serve. Seriousness, sincerity, self-denial, trustworthiness, these are what the Church requires of her servants. 'Faithful in all things' is the motto of the diaconate.

Besides these active servants of the Church, S. Paul mentions another class of women—Widows whose names were entered upon the Church roll at Ephesus.[1] In later times we find 'Widows' occupying a position not unlike that of the Deaconess; but at the time when the Apostle was writing, they seem to have been little more than pensioners of the Church. He does not expect from them any active service, indeed the limit of age which he fixes would forbid that. The only qualifications required of them are that they should be 'widows indeed,' having no means of support, and that they should be of blameless character, with a good record of past service.

[1] 1 Tim. v. 3-16.

A third class, the Virgins, who afterwards occupied so important a position in the Church, is noticed by the Apostle elsewhere; but he lays down no rules concerning them, having, as he says, 'no commandment of the Lord.'[1]

Such is the testimony which Scripture affords with regard to the ministry of women in the early Church, and to the development of the female diaconate. 'It appears to me,' says Dean Howson, 'that if we take our stand simply on the ground of the New Testament, the argument for the recognition of Deaconesses as a part of the Christian ministry is as strong as the argument for episcopacy.'[2] And Bishop Lightfoot, when commenting on the imperfect translation of Romans xvi. 1, and 1 Timothy iii. 11, says, 'If the testimony borne in these two passages to a ministry of women in the Apostolic times had not been thus blotted out of our English Bibles, attention would probably have been directed to the subject at an earlier date, and our English Church would not have remained so long maimed in one of her hands.'[3]

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 25. [2] *The Diaconate of Women*, p. 33.
[3] *On a fresh Revision of the English New Testament*, p. 114 n.

CHAPTER II

THE DEACONESS OF THE FOURTH CENTURY

WE have seen that the New Testament recognises a ministry (*diakonia*) of women parallel with the ministry (*diakonia*) of men, and that S. Paul uses the same word 'Deacon' (*diakonos*) in speaking of both men and women ministers. We have now to enquire what was the practical interpretation which the Church in later days put upon the testimony of Scripture respecting the female diaconate.

It is often a help in seeking to judge clearly of a life, whether individual or corporate, to study it first when it has attained its maturity, and thence to trace it back to its already told beginning. Adopting this method with the subject before us, we will pass over for the present such scattered mentions of Deaconesses as are to be found in the earlier pages of Church history, and study the Order at a time when it had reached its greatest vigour and fullest development. To do this we must look to the Eastern Church in the fourth

century. The great centre both of political and religious life in the East at this period was the imperial city of Constantinople. To this city, therefore, we naturally turn for information with regard to the ministry of women, and especially of those who held the office of the diaconate. Nor are we disappointed in our search. We see women engaged in active service, as in the days of the Apostles, and we find the female diaconate thoroughly understood and recognised by the Church.

The Deaconess of the fourth century lived in a stirring period. She witnessed the last great struggle of paganism, under the emperor Julian, to recover its lost hold upon the civilised world, and she saw the complete triumph of Christianity throughout the Roman State. But it was a time of great danger to the Church. Though victorious over her foes without, she was torn in pieces by internal dissensions. The Arian controversy was raging fiercely, and the Catholic faith was in grave peril. The recognition and honour paid to the Church by the State added to her difficulties, for the emperors interfered freely in ecclesiastical matters, and were too often found on the side of the heretics. The Church, moreover, had lost her primitive simplicity and purity. As her wealth and influence increased, and the fires of persecu-

tion which had tested the faith of her members died out, a terrible decline in morals and devotion ensued. Christianity became fashionable, and a gradual lowering of its high standard was the result. The Christians 'mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.' But there were many great and noble characters who stood out conspicuously amidst much that was corrupt and base, and who preserved the faith and purity of the Church. Such an one was John Chrysostom, who, after spending most of his earlier life in Antioch, was in 398 A.D. made Bishop of Constantinople. From his pen we get a graphic picture of the life of this great city. He describes and denounces in forcible language the corruptions of the clergy, the laxity of morals and the love of pagan customs and amusements which prevailed among the laity. He depicts, in particular, the vices and follies of the great ladies of his day. But from him we also learn more than any other writer tells us of the life and work of the earnest Christian women of this age. He himself owed much to his mother. It was the beauty of her character which made the heathen Libanius exclaim: 'Heavens, what women these Christians have!' Women played an important part in the history of his episcopate, and while many were his faithful friends, others became his inveterate foes.

The empress Flaccilla was a simple and beautiful character. She would visit unattended the hospitals in Constantinople, waiting upon the patients, and dressing their wounds. She exercised too a wise and softening influence over her husband Theodosius. But Eudoxia, the wife of her son Arcadius, was a woman of a different stamp. She was very ambitious, and, not content with ruling her husband, aspired to be mistress of the Empire. At first she courted the favour of Chrysostom and made large gifts to the Church. But later on, angered by his plain speaking, and fearing his influence in the city, she encouraged his enemies in their efforts to depose him.

But while the empress and her ladies plotted for his destruction, assisted even by some of his own clergy and fellow-bishops, the Deaconesses and other women connected with the Church stood faithfully by him. Their fidelity has earned for them a permanent place in the annals of this period. All three classes of consecrated women are represented. There is Nicarete, a Virgin, of noble family, who had been unjustly deprived of the greater part of her wealth, but who gave all her time and such means as she still possessed to the relief of the poor and sick. She was full of 'ability, benevolence, and resource,' and had special skill in the art of medicine. S. Chrysostom

wished her to become a Deaconess, that he might place her at the head of the Church Virgins, but she refused, being, as her biographer relates,[1] of a 'modest, thoughtful and retiring' nature, and shrinking from the responsibility of an official ecclesiastical position.

Then there is the Widow Silvina, daughter of Gildo, the Count of Africa, a lady of large means, and related by marriage to the Empress Flaccilla. She lost her husband early in life, and though she seems to have continued to live at court, she vowed perpetual widowhood, and used her wealth and influence in the service of the Church. She was an earnest supporter of S. Chrysostom, and made one of his inner circle of friends.[2]

But by far the larger number of the women whose story has been preserved to us belonged to the Order of Deaconesses. There were at this time forty Deaconesses attached to the principal Church of Constantinople. We learn particulars of several of these through the letters which S. Chrysostom wrote to them when he was in exile.[3] These letters reveal how warm was the friendship which existed between the Archbishop and this band of ministering women. Three are addressed to 'Amprucla, the Deaconess,

[1] Sozomen, *H. E.*, viii. 23. [2] Palladius, p. 90.
[3] Chrys. *Epp.* vol. iii. [Ed. Ben.] p. 549, *et seq.*

and those with her.' The first (ep. xcvi.) is a letter of encouragement and comfort in the midst of the troubles through which they were passing. 'The waves that beat upon the rocks cannot move them in the least, but rather by the violence of the shock they break themselves and pass away.' She knows all he can say, yet he must write. She will be repaid by God for all her goodness to him. She must write often of her welfare and that of her whole house. Nothing comforts him like letters. In a second (ep. ciii.) he assures her that, far away as he is, he has heard of their brave and noble deeds as much as if he were on the spot. He congratulates them on their 'courage, patience, unchangeable resolve, firm and adamantine mind, bold speech and brave utterance.' Present and future blessings are theirs. 'But you have greatly pained me in my distant absence by not even deigning to write to me. I know it is not carelessness. Whether you write or are silent, I am sure of your warm affection. It was because there was no one to write for you. Yet even so, you should have sent me a letter in your own tongue, and with your own hand.' He wants to know day by day of her welfare; she must make up for the past by a 'perfect shower of letters.' It would seem that Amprucla had not been to blame, but

that their letters had crossed; for in his next (ep. cxci.) S. Chrysostom acknowledges her's, and says, 'you must not talk of "daring" in being the first to write. You must multiply the favour, and send me perfect showers of letters.' From the second letter we gather that Amprucla was a foreigner, and her name bears this out. It has been suggested that she was the same person as Procla, and it is possible that the latter may have been the more civilised name by which she was sometimes known.

Three more of S. Chrysostom's letters are addressed to Pentadia. She was the widow of the Consul Timasius. When he was disgraced and banished from court, she fled for refuge to the Church, and was protected by the Archbishop. On the death of her husband she became a Deaconess. In the tumult which followed the banishment of S. Chrysostom, she and several other women were arrested on the charge of having been accomplices in the destruction by fire of the Church of S. Sophia. Referring to this, the Archbishop writes (ep. xciv.), 'they drew to the Forum one who knew nought beyond church and chamber, from the Forum to the law-court, from the law-court to the prison. They whetted the tongues of false witnesses, and pieced together shameless informa-

tion, . . . they left no stone unturned that they might compel thee by terror to say the opposite of what thou knewest.' But her courage and firmness in asserting her innocence silenced her enemies, and though imprisoned for a time she does not seem to have suffered severely. On being released she proposed leaving Constantinople, and possibly joining the Archbishop in his exile, but he urged her to remain (ep. civ.), 'first, because you are the support of the city there, a wide haven, and a staff, and a firm bulwark for those who are in distress,' and secondly, because the journey she meditated was too trying and dangerous for her to undertake in her delicate state of health. But he begs (ep. clxxxv.) that she will comfort him by sending constant tidings of herself and the affairs of the Church.

One of the Deaconesses however, did follow him to Cucusus, a remote and desolate village among the mountains, that she might minister to his needs. This was the aged Sabiniana, who is supposed to have been his aunt. In one of his letters to Olympias he says (ep. xliii.), 'My lady the Deaconess Sabiniana arrived here the same day that I did, knocked up, indeed, and wearied out, as being of that advanced age when travel is a toil, but in her

earnestness a girl, and making no account of suffering, and ready, as she said, to go as far as Scythia; for the report went that I was to be deported thither. And now her mind is made up, she says, never to go away again, but to remain wherever I am. The ecclesiastics of the place received her with much attention and kindness.'

At the head of all the Deaconesses, and pre-eminent among the women-workers of this age, stands the queenly figure of Olympias. She belonged to a noble pagan family, and was a woman of remarkable beauty and great wealth. She had been left an orphan when very young, but was fortunate in having as her guardian a Christian man of noble character, and as her teacher Theosebia, the sister of S. Amphilochius, a woman noted for her piety; while Gregory Nazianzen, then Bishop of Constantinople, took a fatherly interest in her training and development. Under these favourable circumstances she grew up, and soon proved to be a woman of no ordinary character and abilities. She was married early to a young man named Nebridius, who held high official rank. Many Bishops attended the wedding, and Gregory, who was unable to be present, addressed a poem to Olympias, containing advice as to the duties of a married

woman. Within two years she was left a widow, and from that time she determined to consecrate her life to the service of the Church. 'Like a doe,' says her biographer,[1] 'she leapt the snare of second marriage without being caught,' though not without considerable difficulty. For the Emperor desired to marry her to Elpidius, a kinsman of his, and on her refusal he ordered her property to be confiscated until she was thirty years of age, and forbade her to attend Church or to hold any communication with the bishops. She, however, only replied by thanking the Emperor, saying: 'A virtue worthy of an emperor and suited to a bishop hast thou, my lord, shown towards my lowly self, in commanding my heaviest burden to be kept in charge, concerning which I was in anxiety how it should be administered; and yet more wilt thou do, if thou order it to be distributed to the poor and to the Churches.' It was not long before Theodosius relented, restored her property, and left her free to carry out her wish. Although still very young, she was ordained Deaconess by Nectarius, who had succeeded Gregory as Bishop of Constantinople. Her time and wealth were now devoted entirely to the Church. 'She was the friend, entertainer,

[1] Palladius *Dial. S. John Chrys.* Ed. Paris, 1680, p. 149 f.

adviser, of many of the most eminent ecclesiastics of the day; the liberal patroness of their works in Greece, Asia, Syria, not only by donations of money, but even of landed property.'[1] She was generous to a fault, and when S. Chrysostom became her bishop, he checked her somewhat reckless liberality, saying, 'You are God's steward, you cannot depose yourself from your responsibility of dispensing His wealth wisely for Him.' Her biographer relates, how on one occasion she protected and cared for a body of monks, who had been expelled by Theophilus, Bishop of Alexandria, one of S. Chrysostom's most powerful opponents. 'These are they,' says Palladius, 'whom Priests and Levites overlooked, and to the shame of men a manly woman entertained, and to the condemnation of bishops a Deaconess lodged, whose praise for many causes circulates in the Churches, she having copied the Good Samaritan.' Among S. Chrysostom's women friends Olympias held the chief place, and she had the privilege of ministering to his bodily needs, which he was apt to neglect. 'She afforded him freedom from the distraction of his daily food, which is no small thing for the workman of Christ, who night and day cares for the things of Christ.' When at last his

[1] Stephens, *Life of S. Chrysostom*, p. 281

enemies succeeded in obtaining his banishment, the Archbishop, having said good-bye to his clergy in the Church, 'entered into the baptistery, and called Olympias, who had never departed from the Church, together with Pentadia and Procla the Deaconesses, and Silvina, the wife of the late blessed Nebridius, who adorned in comely wise her widowhood.' He urged them to remain faithful to the Church, and having given them his benediction he sent them away, lest the sight of their grief should unnerve him. Olympias was among those who suffered persecution after his departure. She was brought before the Prefect, and charged with having set fire to the Church and having wasted her property, but she defended herself with so much spirit and ability that the accusations were withdrawn. She was then ordered to give in her allegiance to the new bishop, and on her refusal was heavily fined. Her health, never very good, gave way under the strain of trouble and anxiety about her friend, and she became seriously ill. On her recovery (405 A.D.) she left Constantinople, and the community of which she had been the head was dispersed, to her great grief. She kept up a constant correspondence with S. Chrysostom in his exile, sending him many bodily comforts

and keeping him supplied with news of his beloved Church. No less than eighteen of his letters to her have been preserved,[1] addressed to 'My lady, the most reverend and religious Deaconess Olympias.' Some of them give an account of the trials and hardships he was undergoing in his exile, while others are full of the praises of his friend. Their language is Oriental in its effusiveness, and the picture they present is in some respects alien to our Western sympathies, but it is interesting as showing the type of Christian character which specially called forth the admiration of one of the greatest saints of the fourth century. There is no need, he says, to dwell upon her almsgiving, 'whereof thou holdest the sceptre, and didst bind on the crown of old,' nor can he describe aright her 'varied, manifold, and many-sided endurance through all the trials which had beset her, and the persecutions she had suffered on all sides. 'But if one should turn also to the other forms of this virtue, and should go through no more thy sufferings received from others, but those which thou hast contrived for thyself, — what stone, what iron, what adamant shall he not

[1] Chrys. *Epp.*, vol. iii., p. 549, *et seq.* [Ed. Ben.]. These extracts are taken from the translation by J. M. Ludlow in his *Woman's Work in the Church*, p. 40 f.

find conquered by thee? For having received a flesh so tender and delicate, and nourished up in all kinds of luxury, thou hast so conquered it by various sufferings, that it lies no better than slain, and thou hast brought upon thyself such a swarm of diseases as to confound the physician's skill, and the power of medicine, . . . and to live in perpetual fellowship with pain.' Self-control he could hardly call it, for the desires of the flesh were extinguished. She had taught herself 'to be content with so much food and drink as not to perish,' she had accustomed herself to spend whole nights without sleep. 'For as sleep is natural to others, so is watching to thee.' He would like to dwell upon her 'patience, humility and many-shaped almsgiving which has stretched to the very ends of the world, and on thy charity, that hath outdone ten thousand furnaces, and on thy boundless prudence, full of grace, and surpassing the measures of nature. . . . But I will endeavour to show the lion by his claw, by saying a few words of thy dress, of the garments that hang simply and at haphazard around thee. This indeed seems a lesser achievement than others, but if any should view it diligently, he will find it very great, and needing a philosophic soul, which tramples upon all the things of life, and

takes flight to the very heaven. . . . For I do not only marvel at the unspeakable coarseness of thy attire, surpassing that of the very beggars, but above all at the shapelessness, the carelessness of thy garments, of thy shoes, of thy walk; all which things are virtue's colours.' Her generous hospitality must not pass unnoticed, 'for thy house was not only open to all who came, but everywhere, by land and sea, many have enjoyed thy liberality, through thy love of strangers.' Again and again he commends her heroic conduct during the recent persecutions, and how 'without rushing forth into the market-place, nor proceeding through the midst of the city, but seated in a small narrow room, and on a bed, thou nervest and anointest those who stand.'

Such is the portrait of this old world Deaconess. It shows us the figure of a strong, brave, true woman, though some of its features may not be in harmony with our modern conception of the ideal Deaconess. In order to appreciate her aright, we must try to place ourselves amid the circumstances in which Olympias moved. We must remember that her lot was cast in one of the richest and most luxurious cities in the world, in an age when Greek and Roman society was corrupt to the core. She was surrounded by men

and women whose lives were spent in one long round of pleasure and self-indulgence, against which all true earnest souls felt bound to protest by every means in their power. The neglect of the personal appearance and the common necessaries of life, which S Chrysostom dwells upon with such admiration, was her way of protesting against the reckless extravagance in dress and food, which marked those of her rank in society. No doubt such a witness, borne by one of the wealthiest women of the day, would exercise a powerful influence upon the professing Christians among whom she moved. At the same time we cannot but feel that such austerities as those practised by Olympias are hardly in keeping with the life of active ministry to which the Deaconess was called. It is clear that the spirit of asceticism was growing rapidly, and overshadowing the practical life of service. We have here the first indication of one of the great causes which led to the decline of the primitive ideal of the Deaconess, and to her gradual absorption into the monastic orders by which she was presently surrounded.

CHAPTER III

THE DEACONESS OF THE FOURTH CENTURY—(*continued*)

WE must pass on now from Constantinople to glance at the records of other Churches in the East. Next in importance to the capital itself, as a centre of Church life and influence, was the city of Antioch, in Syria. Here again we meet the Deaconess, at an even earlier date than that of Olympias. Our chief informant is the historian Theodoret, who gives graphic pictures of two of these ministering women. The first,[1] Publia, was an aged widow, whose son John held the position of chief Presbyter in Antioch, while she presided over the 'choir (or 'band') of Virgins.' It was during the reign of the Emperor Julian; and on one of his visits to the city, Publia, with more zeal than tact, selected certain psalms which denounce idolatry, and caused the Virgins to chant them while he was passing the Church. 'The idols of the heathen are silver and gold,

[1] *Hist. Eccl.* iii., xix.

the work of men's hands,' sang the choir: 'they that make them are like unto them, and so are all such as put their trust in them.' The words reached the ears of the apostate emperor, and he angrily ordered the singers to be silenced. But Publia's zeal was not easily suppressed. Again as the Emperor went by the voices of the Virgins rang out in the words of the old Hebrew song, 'Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered.' Stung by such open defiance, Julian sent for the mistress of the Virgins. The Deaconess was brought before him, and in spite of her venerable appearance, he caused her to be struck on the face by his guards until the blood flowed. Nothing daunted, she returned home rejoicing, and continued to chant the psalms. Her biographer praises her 'divine boldness,' and rather inaptly compares her to the sweet psalmist of Israel, who by such means laid the spirit that vexed Saul. Whether or no we share his admiration of her methods, we must feel glad that he thought the incident worthy of record, and so has preserved to us this valuable notice of a Deaconess presiding over the Church Virgins.

Theodoret's second picture shows us a Deaconess engaged, as in the Apostolic days, in missionary work. He does not mention her name,

but this scarcely diminishes the interest of the narrative, for the historian does not single her out as an exception, but leaves us to infer that she was one among many who were thus labouring in the Master's service. His account is worth quoting in full, for the glimpse it affords us into the actual work of what we may call the 'Parish Deaconess' of this period :—

'A young man who was a [heathen] priest's son, and brought up in impiety, about this time went over to the true religion. For a lady remarkable for her devotion and counted worthy of the spiritual gift of the diaconate was an intimate friend of his mother. When he came to visit her with his mother, while yet a tiny lad, she used to welcome him with affection and urge him to the true religion. On the death of his mother the young man used to visit her and enjoyed the advantage of her wonted teaching. Deeply impressed by her counsels, he enquired of the Teacher by what means he might both escape the superstition of his father and have part and lot in the truth which she preached. She replied that he must flee from his father, and honour rather the Creator both of his father and himself, that he must get to some other city wherein he might lie hid, and escape the violence of the impious emperor; and

she promised to manage this for him. "Then," said the young man, "I shall come and commit my soul to you." Not many days afterwards Julian came to Daphne to celebrate a public feast. With him came the young man's father, both as a priest, and as accustomed to attend the emperor; and with their father came the young man and his brother, being appointed to the service of the temple, and charged with the duty of ceremonially sprinkling the imperial viands. It is the custom for the festival of Daphne to last for seven days. On the first day the young man stood at the emperor's couch, and according to the prescribed usage sprinkled the meats, and filled them with pollution. Then at full speed he ran to Antioch, and making his way to that admirable lady, "I am come," said he, "to you; and I have kept my promise. Do you look to the salvation of each and fulfil your pledge." At once she arose and conducted the young man to Meletius, the man of God, who ordered him to remain for awhile upstairs in the lodging. His father, after wandering about all over Daphne in search of the boy, then returned to the city and explored the streets and lanes, turning his eyes in all directions and longing to light upon his lad. At length he arrived at the place where the divine Meletius had his lodging;

and looking up he saw his son peeping through the lattice. He ran up, drew him along, got him down and carried him off home. Then he first laid on him many stripes, then applied hot spits to his feet and hands and back, then shut him up in his bedroom, bolted the door on the outside, and returned to Daphne. So I myself have heard the man himself narrate in his old age, and he added further that he was inspired and filled with divine grace, and broke in pieces all his father's idols, and made mockery of their helplessness. Afterwards when he bethought him of what he had done he feared his father's return and besought his Master, Christ, to signify approval of his deeds, break the bolts, and open the doors. "For it is for thy sake," said he, "that I have thus suffered and thus acted." "Even as I thus spoke," he told me, "out fell the bolts and open flew the doors, and back I ran to the Teacher. She dressed me up in women's garments and took me with her in her covered carriage back to the divine Meletius. He handed me over to the bishop of Jerusalem, at that time Cyril, and we started by night for Palestine." After the death of Julian this young man led his father also into the way of truth. This act he told me with the rest. So in this fashion these men were guided to the know-

ledge of God and were made partakers of salvation.'[1]

Among Theodoret's letters are two written to Deaconesses,[2] though where they lived we do not know. One is addressed to the Deaconess Celerina, telling her of his troubles, and begging her to 'show all possible zeal on behalf of the doctrines of the Gospel, and the peace of the Churches.' The other is a letter of sympathy to the Deaconess Casiana, written on the death of her son. He begins by reminding her of the consolation to be derived from the writings of the Holy Evangelists and blessed Prophets, 'but,' he continues, 'I am sure it is needless to cull these passages, and suggest them to your piety, nurtured as you have been from the beginning in the inspired word, ruling your life in accordance with them, and needing no other teaching. But I do implore you to remember those words that charge us to master our feelings, and promise us eternal life, proclaim the destruction of death, and announce the common resurrection of us all. Besides all this, nay, before all this, I ask you to reflect that He who has bidden these things to be is the

[1] *Hist. Eccles.* iii. 14. Translation from *Lib. of Post-Nicene Fathers* (with some corrections).

[2] Epp. ci. and xvii.

Lord, that He is a Lord all wise and all good, who knows exactly what is best for us, and to this end guides all our life. Sometimes death is better than life, and what seems distressing is really pleasanter than fancied joys. I beg your piety to accept the consolation offered by my humility, that you may serve the Lord of all by nobly bearing your pain, and affording to men as well as women an example of true wisdom. For all will admire the strength of mind which has bravely borne the attack of grief, and broken the force of its violent assault by the magnanimity of its resolution. And we are not without great comfort in the living likenesses of your departed son; for he has left behind him offspring worthy of deep affection, who may be able to stay the excess of our sorrow. Lastly, I implore you to remember in your grief what your bodily infirmity can endure, and to avoid increasing your sufferings by mourning overmuch; and I implore our Lord of His infinite resources to give you ground of consolation.'

Besides these historic Deaconesses, there is a legendary one associated with the city of Antioch. Her story is interwoven with that of Pelagia, a celebrated actress. Under the title of 'the Repentance of the holy Pelagia,'[1] the writer, who

[1] *Legenden der heiligen Pelagia*, Usener, p. 10 f.

calls himself 'James, the Deacon,' records how this beautiful but sinful woman was converted by the preaching of the saintly Bishop Nonnus, who was paying a visit to Antioch. He at once sent his Deacon to inform the Bishop of the city of what had taken place, and to receive his orders. The Bishop replied by expressing his joy, and requesting Nonnus to complete the good work he had begun, by receiving the penitent into the Church. The Deacon returned, and with him Romana, 'the first of the Deaconesses,' who had been sent by the Bishop to assist at the baptism. She instructs Pelagia how to act, and how to answer Bishop Nonnus, and after her baptism she receives and teaches her, becoming her 'spiritual mother,' and protecting her from the assaults of the devil. Although this story appears to be little more than a religious romance, it may be accepted as evidence of the conditions of Church life and order at the time with which we are concerned, and is a valuable illustration of the position and work of the Deaconess. In Antioch, as in Constantinople, she has a recognised place among the Church's ministers.

In other parts of the East, the order is evidently well known. Sozomen relates[1] how Elpidius, Bishop of Satala (probably in Armenia), was deposed by

[1] *Hist. Eccl.* iv. 24.

the synod of Rimini 'for having, contrary to the decrees of the synod of Meletina, restored to the presbyterate a certain Eusebius who had been deposed; and for having counted worthy of the diaconate one Nectaria, who had been put out of communion for transgressions of covenants and oaths, whereas, according to the laws of the Church, she could have no part in honour' (*i.e.* no office could be conferred on her). S. Epiphanius, Bishop of Cyprus, includes Deaconesses in his list of Church officials, and describes their duties.[1] One of S. Basil's letters[2] is addressed to the three daughters of Count Terentius, who were Deaconesses of the Church at Samosata. It bears the date 372 A.D., and is a short treatise on the doctrine of the Trinity. We meet with a Deaconess, also, in the narrative of S. Basil's sister, S. Macrina, which was written by another of her brothers, S. Gregory of Nyssa.[3] The family was a remarkable one; their mother was a woman of beautiful character, and their grandmother had been a confessor of the faith. The young man to whom Macrina was betrothed having died, she resolved to remain single, and finally persuaded her mother to join her in forming a community of Virgins on their family estate at Annesi, in Pontus. Here she lived until

[1] *Expos. Fidei.* n. 21 (quoted below, p. 67); *Hær. Collyr.* 79, n. 3.
[2] Ep. cv. [3] *Vita Macrinae,* Migne *P.G.* xlvi.

her death in 379 A.D., and was renowned for her great saintliness. She is generally said to have been a Deaconess, but there does not seem to be any authority for the statement, which appears to be based upon a single expression used by her brother in his account of her life. Speaking of her life in the Convent, S. Gregory describes the tender care she took of her mother, besides which, he says, 'she lent her hands to the mystical services,'[1] a phrase which probably refers to such matters as her care of the sacred vessels belonging to the Chapel. But though this does not justify us in claiming Macrina as a Deaconess, we know of at least one in her community. 'Now there was,' says S. Gregory, 'a certain one put over the choir of the Virgins, in the standing of the diaconate, Lampadia by name.' With her, as he tells us, he consulted about his sister's funeral. The position of head of the Virgins, held by Lampadia, is one which seems to have been frequently occupied by the early Deaconess; and there was but a short step, as we shall presently see, between this and her identification with the Abbess.

S. Gregory's wife,[2] Theosebia, is another to whom later historians have given the name of

[1] Col. 965. *ταῖς μυστικαῖς ὑπηρεσίαις τὰς χεῖρας ἑαυτῆς ἔχρησε.*

[2] S. Gregory's marriage is disputed by some writers, but the evidence in favour of it is strong.

Deaconess, but here again there is no evidence that she held the office. All that is known of her comes from a letter[1] which Gregory Nazianzen wrote to her husband after her death, sympathising with him on his loss. He dwells in words of loving praise on the beauty of her character, calling her 'the Church's boast, the ornament of Christ,' adding that she was 'truly sacred, a Priest's yokefellow, of like honour, and worthy of the great mysteries.' Probably it is this expression which has led to her being regarded as an illustration of the decree of the Council in Trullo, which enacted that when a Priest separated from his wife on his elevation to the episcopate, she might, if found worthy, 'be advanced to the standing of the diaconate.'

We have seen that the Deaconess was well known in the churches of Constantinople and Antioch, and in other parts of the Eastern empire. In Palestine also she was probably to be found now, as at a later date, though the evidence for her existence is indirect. It depends upon a letter[2] written by Epiphanius to John, Bishop of Jerusalem, in which he excuses himself for having forcibly ordained as Presbyter Jerome's brother Paulinianus, though the latter resided in John's

[1] Greg. Naz. (Caillau) Ep. 197; Tom. ii. p. 162.
[2] Jerome, Ep. li. (Vall. i. 244).

province. After urging that he had done it for the good of the Church, he adds: 'but I never ordained Deaconesses, and sent them into the provinces of others,' a retort which seems to imply that this was a breach of episcopal etiquette of which the Bishop of Jerusalem had himself been guilty.

Such is the glimpse which the history of this period affords us of the lives of the primitive Deaconesses. It is evident that the Order was well known and widely spread throughout a great part of the Eastern Church.[1] The story of some of its more remarkable members has shown us that the office was frequently held by women of rank and wealth. We must remember, however, that these are only representatives of a large body of such ministering women, whose names, though unknown to us, are enrolled among the faithful servants of the Church. A description of the duties and position of these women-deacons, will be found in a later chapter.

One or two legendary stories of Deaconesses may be mentioned here, for although they have no

[1] Several of the heretical sects also made use of the ministry of Deaconesses. We find them among the Montanists (cf. quotation from Hilary of Rome, note on p. 52), and among the Paulianists (cf. Counc. of Nicæa, quoted on p. 70). Sozomen mentions a certain Eusebia, a Deaconess of the sect of the Macedonians, *H.E.* ix. 2. The Nestorian Church also had its Deaconesses (cf. Appendix B).

historical value, they help to show what were the conditions of Church life in the author's day, and what he conceived them to have been at the time of which he wrote. Such is the interest attaching to the legend of the Deaconess Synesis, the daughter of the king of the Anthropophagi (*see* Appendix A, p. 195).

Another romance is that of S. Martina, who is described in an ancient lectionary in the Vatican,[1] as 'Virgin, Martyr, and Deaconess.' An account of her life is found in the *Acta Sanctorum*.[2] She is described as being of noble family, her father having three times held the office of Consul; and as possessing large means, and many slaves. She was, says the writer, 'pitiful to all the poor, keeping the law of the Holy Trinity, and by the gift of God she was a Deaconess.' She is said to have been tortured and put to death at Rome, by the Emperor Alexander, about 230 A.D. She thus figures as a Western Deaconess, but her story is probably of Eastern origin, and appears to have been written originally in Greek.

We come upon another Deaconess, this time in Egypt, in connection with the legendary account of S. Eupraxia, the daughter of Antigonus, and cousin of the Emperor Theodosius. This saint is

[1] *Torrigius de Crypt. Vatic.* sec. imp. p. 557.
[2] Jan. I, p. 11.

said to have retired with her mother to a monastery at Thebes, where she was warmly welcomed by the Deaconess who presided over the nuns.[1] These stories show how natural and familiar was the idea of the female diaconate to Church writers in the East.

[1] S. John of Damascus, *2nd Oration on Images.*

CHAPTER IV

THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN IN THE WEST

WE have studied the evidence which the records of the Eastern Church afford of an organised ministry of women-workers during the fourth century, and have seen what clear testimony they bear to the existence of the female diaconate. We must now turn westward, and ask how far and in what form the Church of Rome, during the same period, made use of the work of women. Happily here, as in Constantinople, we have a living picture drawn for us by an eminent Father of the Church. S. Jerome, like S. Chrysostom, describes in vivid colours the state of society, both Christian and pagan, in his day, and from his letters we get a sketch of the life and work of some of Rome's noblest women. They were not less active than their sisters at Constantinople, though the form of their ministry differed. At the very time that Olympias was acting as head of the Deaconesses in the eastern capital, Marcella was presiding over a community of women which

she had founded in her own palace at Rome. She came of a noble Roman family, and had been brought up in all the luxury which belonged to her high rank. In her girlhood she had seen S. Athanasius, and the impression then received deepened later into a strong desire to devote her life entirely to the service of God. She was married when very young, and early left a widow, when she set herself to carry out her purpose. With the help of her sister Ascella, a virgin, she converted her palace on the Aventine into a religious establishment, where she was soon joined by many congenial friends, drawn from the highest ranks of society. Some resided permanently, while others paid visits to the Institution from time to time, using it as a retreat from the distractions and temptations of their ordinary life. The spirit of asceticism, which at this time prevailed in the East, had not yet developed in the West, and Marcella's community was a novelty in Rome, and encountered no little opposition from the fashionable society of her day. 'In those days,' says Jerome, 'no high-born lady at Rome had made profession of the monastic life, or had ventured—so strange and ignominious and degrading did it then seem—publicly to call herself a nun.'[1] The new society does not seem to have

[1] Ep. cxxvii. (from translation in *Lib. of Post-Nicene Fathers*).

had any conventual rule. Its members lived a simple life, not mixing in the pleasures of the world around them, yet not practising any undue austerities. Some, like Ascella, were professed virgins, and lived in seclusion, others, like Marcella herself, were young widows, possessed of large means, which they gave to the service of the poor and the sick. Fabiola, who for a time was associated with them, is famous for having founded the first hospital. Their time was occupied partly in active works of charity, partly in devotional exercises and study. Several of them were remarkable for their learning, being able to read the Scriptures both in Greek and Hebrew. Jerome, who was an honoured guest of the Community for nearly three years, calls it the 'ecclesia domestica,' and gives a very graphic description of some of its inmates.

There is Ascella, 'alike pleasant in her serious moods, and serious in her pleasant ones: her manner while winning is always grave, and while grave is always winning: her speech is silent, and her silence is speech: her pace is neither too fast nor too slow: her demeanour is always the same. She disregards refinement, and is careless about her dress; when she does attend to it, it is without attending.'[1] In contrast to her there is Blæsilla,

[1] Ep. xxiv.

of whom he writes, 'In days gone by our dear widow was extremely fastidious in her dress, and spent whole days before her mirror to correct its deficiencies.' But a severe illness had given her a more serious view of life, and she devoted herself to prayer and study. So gifted was she that Jerome says, 'she even rivalled the great Origen in those accomplishments which won for him the admiration of Greece; for, in a few months, or rather days, she so completely mastered the difficulties of Hebrew as to emulate her mother's zeal in learning and singing the psalms.'[1] Her mother was Paula, a high-born Roman matron, who, after residing for some time with Marcella, went with her other daughter, Eustochium, to Palestine, and founded both a monastery and a nunnery at Bethlehem. Here they were joined by Jerome, who was engaged on the Latin translation of the Scriptures known as the *Vulgate*. In this work they gave him valuable help both as scribes and translators.

Meanwhile, Marcella's community continued to exercise a purifying influence on the society of the imperial city. She seems to have been consulted even by the clergy. 'After my departure from Rome,' says Jerome, 'in case of a dispute arising as to the testimony of Scripture on any

[1] Ep. xxxix.

subject, recourse was had to her to settle it, and so wise was she, and so well did she understand what philosophers call τὸ πρέπον, that is, 'the becoming' in what she did, that when she answered questions, she gave her opinion, not as her own, but as from me or someone else, thus admitting that what she taught she had herself learned from others: for she knew that the Apostle had said, 'I suffer not a woman to teach,' and she would not seem to inflict a wrong upon the male sex, many of whom (including sometimes priests) questioned her concerning obscure and doubtful points.'[1] This Community was broken up in 410 A.D., when Rome was sacked by Alaric, and Marcella was so cruelly used by the Goths that she died within a few days.[2]

As we place side by side these two pictures of women's work in the East and in the West, we are struck by one important difference between them. In the former case we see women assigned a definite place in the ministry of the Church, and formally set apart to their office. In the latter there is no mention of any such official recognition. Having dedicated themselves to a life of devotion, Marcella and her friends band themselves into

[1] Ep. cxxvii.

[2] For a fuller account of this community, see Mrs Oliphant's *Makers of Modern Rome*, Bk. i

a guild for mutual help in the practice of charity and holiness. Although loyal servants of the Church, they do not seem to have been under direct ecclesiastical control. They do not exist, like their sisters in the East, simply for active service, nor do they rank among the Church's officers.

So far as our present knowledge goes, there is no evidence for the existence of Deaconesses in the Roman Church in this or earlier periods of her history. None of the Western Fathers of the first four centuries mention the name. Almost the only notice of the Order is to be found in a commentary falsely ascribed to Jerome, and here the reference goes to prove that the office was not recognised by the Western Church in the writer's day. Commenting on the ministry of Phoebe, he says, 'So now in Eastern parts Deaconesses appear to minister among their own sex in baptism, or in the ministry of the Word; because we find that women taught in private, as for instance Priscilla.' And again, in reference to 1 Timothy iii., he says, 'he (S. Paul) orders them (women) to be chosen in like manner as the deacons, whence it is understood that he speaks concerning those whom even to-day in the East they call *diaconissae*.'[1]

[1] Pseudo-Hieron. *Vallarsi*, xl. 215, 411.

Hilary of Rome[1] writing on the same passage (1 Tim. iii.) treats the idea of women-deacons as preposterous.[2] Clearly they did not exist in the Roman Church in his day. S. Martina is the only early Deaconess whose name is associated with Rome; and her story, as we have seen, is probably an Eastern romance of a later date, and cannot be used as evidence. A fuller light on these early centuries might indeed reveal the presence of the Order of Deaconesses in some parts of the Western Church, but the silence of the historians goes to prove that, if it was ever established, it had never risen to the prominence which it attained in the East, and by the fourth century had become practically extinct.

Olympias and Marcella may thus fairly be taken as types of the two chief forms of women's work which prevailed at this time in the Churches to which they severally belonged, the one representing the life of active service, the other the life of quiet devotion. Not that either of these types

[1] Called Ambrosiaster (*i.e.* Pseudo-Ambrose), c. 467.

[2] His words are: 'But the Cataphrygians (*i.e.* the Montanists), catching at an opportunity of going wrong, because after mentioning Deacons he addresses 'women,' argue with a vain presumption that even they should be ordained (namely as) Deaconesses (*diaconas*); whereas they know that the Apostles chose seven Deacons. Was there no woman found fit (to be chosen as one of them) then, though we read that in company with the eleven Apostles there were holy women?' Migne, *Patr. Lat.* xvii. 470.

alone fully represented the ministry of women, whether in the East or in the West. The Church in Constantinople had its Widows and Virgins side by side with its Deaconesses, and in Rome the work of women was not confined to communities like Marcella's. Eusebius, in his list of Church officials, quotes Cornelius as saying that in the year 250 A.D., there were in Rome 'widows and distressed persons more than 1500, all of whom the grace and loving kindness of the Church nourisheth.'[1] No doubt many of these widows rendered some active service in return for the support they received. Jerome, writing to a Presbyter who was ill, says: 'The Church maintains many elderly women who by their ministrations may oblige you and benefit themselves, so that even your sickness may bear fruit in the shape of almsdeeds.'[2] The Order of Widows had arisen out of the practical necessity of providing for aged women who had been left destitute and dependent upon the Church's charity. They were to 'continue in supplications and prayers,'[3] but no special duties were assigned to them. Tertullian, writing at the end of the second century says, that 'to a seat in the widowhood' were elected, at sixty years of age, women who had been once married, and 'such as had brought

[1] Eus., *H.E.* vi. 43, 11. [2] Ep. lii. [3] 1 Tim. v. 5.

up children; forsooth, that being trained by experience in all the affections, they might easily know how to help others with counsel and comfort, and none the less they might have passed through all those things by which a woman can be tested.'[1]

The status of the Order of Widows varied considerably in different parts of the Church. In the East it seems to have been little more than a pension list for the deserving poor. S. Chrysostom protests against any being admitted who were able to support themselves. He speaks of them as alms-women, who gave great trouble by their disorderly conduct and complaining disposition. S. Basil, in one of his Canons refers to 'a widow, who has been enrolled in the number of the widows, that is to say who is being ministered to by the Church,'[2] and it is in this light that the Apostolic Constitutions regard them. The Coptic Church, however, would seem to form an exception to this rule. There the Widows appear to have occupied an honourable position, and some of them were actively employed in ministering to the sick, and in 'whatever other good deeds they may wish to perform.'[3]

The Church-Widows in the West were evidently an important body, and rendered valuable service,

[1] Tert. *De. Virg. Vel.* c. 9. [2] Ep. 199, 24. [3] See Appendix A.

obeying the canon of the so-called fourth Council of Carthage, that 'widows who are supported by the stipend of the Church are to be so assiduous in the work of God, that by their good deeds and prayers they may help the Church.'[1] They seem indeed to have exercised many of the functions which in the East were assigned to Deaconesses. These same statutes, which are of somewhat uncertain origin,[2] direct that 'Widows or dedicated Virgins who are chosen for ministry at the baptism of women, are to be so instructed for their duties that they may be able, with meet and sound speech, to teach ignorant and rustic women at the time when they are to be baptized, in what manner they should respond to their baptizer when questioned, and in what manner they are to live after receiving baptism.' So marked is the similarity between their work and that of the Deaconesses, that it has led some authorities[3] to identify the two Orders, and to accept those passages which refer to the 'Viduate' as evidence in favour of the female diaconate. If this were so, we should have no difficulty in proving the existence of Deaconesses in the Western Church

[1] *Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua.*

[2] Duchesne in his *Origines du Culte Chrétien*. p. 377, n., says that these are a collection of canons formed in Gaul, in the Province of Arles, towards the beginning of the sixth century.

[3] So Bingham, and others.

from a very early period. But there does not appear to be any ground for believing that the two Orders were at any time identical. Bishop Lightfoot, commenting upon the words of Ignatius, 'I salute the Virgins who are called Widows,'[1] says, 'The interpretation of the language of Ignatius has been confused by the assumption that the Widows were the same order as the Deaconesses. This, however, seems to be quite a mistake. Whatever confusion there may have been in later times, in the Apostolic age and for some generations after Ignatius they were distinct. This is clear from S. Paul's language in 1 Timothy, where the qualifications and functions of the two are quite separate; (the Deaconesses are described in iii. 11, the Widows in v. 9 sq.). It held equally when the *Apostolic Constitutions* were compiled.' However similar their work might be, the difference in their ecclesiastical position was quite clear. Both in East and West the widow was not 'ordained,' but 'appointed.' Thus the Council of Tours (567 A.D.) says that 'all know that never in the canonical books is a benediction of a Widow read of,

[1] *Ep. ad. Smyrn.* c. xiii. See also Bishop Lightfoot's speech in the Convocation of York, 1884, where he pointed out that 'the two offices of Deaconess and Widow had different starting points.' That of the former was 'distinctly ministerial,' while that of the latter 'was eleemosynary.'

because her determination alone ought to suffice.'

We have seen that Deaconesses were frequently widows. This was a natural result of the state of society at the time. It would seldom happen that a woman remained unmarried until she was forty or fifty years old (the age at which she was eligible for the office of Deaconess), unless she had become a professed Virgin. A Greek or Roman widow enjoyed a considerable amount of liberty. Before marriage she was entirely under the control of her parents, and when married she was subject to the authority of her husband, but as a widow she was free to choose her own path in life. A strong feeling had grown up in the Church against second marriages, and in spite of S. Paul's directions concerning younger widows, they were urged to devote themselves to 'the religious life.' In the East they were often received into the diaconate, while in the West they enrolled themselves among the Church-Widows, not for support but for protection. Thus it would seem that where the Order of Deaconesses was fully established, there was little need for the work of Widows, and they occupied a subordinate position, but where the Deaconess was unknown, her place was to some extent taken by the Widow, who then figures as an active Church worker.

In the East the distinction between the Deaconess and the Widow is always perfectly clear, but in the West some confusion seems to have arisen about the fifth century. Then, for the first time, we meet with the Deaconess in Gaul, and her appearance is somewhat perplexing. She springs suddenly into light, and evidently attains a position of some prominence, as she is frequently mentioned in the Church Synods of the fifth and sixth centuries. Yet we can hardly think that the Order was of native growth, to judge by the determined opposition it encountered. The Councils mention it only to condemn it. Thus the first Council of Orange, in 441 A.D., enacts that 'Deaconesses (*diaconae*) are on no account to be ordained. If any already exist, let them bow their heads to the benediction which is given to the people.' Nearly eighty years later this prohibition is repeated by the Council of Epaone (517 A.D.), whose jurisdiction extended over the Burgundian kingdom. Its twenty-first canon declared that 'the consecration of widows whom they call Deaconesses we wholly abrogate from all our region, the benediction of penitence[1] alone being laid upon them if they desire to turn

[1] The benediction of penitence appears to be a religious profession, as we judge from iii. Orleans (538 A.D.) c. 24, 25; and iii. Paris (557 A.D.) c. 5.; which speak of professing 'religion, penitence or virginity.'

to religion." Nearly the whole of the rest of Gaul was included in a similar decree of the second Council of Orleans (533 A.D.), which ruled that 'women, who up to this time, contrary to the interdictions of the canons, have received the benediction of the diaconate, if they are proved to have turned again to marriage, are to be expelled from communion; but if, when admonished by the Bishop, they recognise their error, and break off intercourse of this kind, they may return to the grace of communion, after having done penance.' The next canon adds, 'moreover we determine, that to no woman hereafter shall the diaconal benediction be entrusted, by reason of the frailty of this sex.' It is clear from these canons that the female diaconate had gained a footing in Gaul at this period, but how it was introduced we do not know. Its appearance is thus accounted for by Ludlow: 'Southern Gaul was always one of the great battlefields between Eastern and Western feelings. Massilia-Marseilles was an old Greek colony; the relations between "the Province" and Greece, intimate in the days of Cæsar, were intimate still in the early days of the Christian Church; Irenaeus, one of the earliest Greek Fathers, was Bishop of Lyons in the second century. New relations were opened between the two countries in the fifth

century, through the settlement in Provence of the Basilian monks, and the foundation of the great monasteries of Southern Gaul. (S. Faustin, founded 422 A.D.). Now the fifth century, as we have seen, was in point of honour the golden age of the female diaconate in the Eastern Church; and it would be almost unaccountable if, amidst the new tide of Greek influence brought in at this period into Southern Gaul, the female diaconate in its then half-monastic state should not have been sought to be revived or re-introduced.'[1]

The names of two of these Gallican Deaconesses have been preserved. One was the daughter of S. Remigius, who for seventy years was Bishop of Rheims. He died in 530 A.D., and his will contains the following sentence:[2] 'I bequeath to my blessed daughter Hilaria, the Deaconess, a maid named Nora.' Nothing more is known of this Deaconess, but even this slight notice is of value; for S. Remigius was one of the most influential prelates in the north of France at the close of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth century. It is therefore specially interesting to find that his daughter was a Deaconess. He would, doubtless, himself have admitted her to the office, and we

[1] *Woman's Work in the Church*, p. 66.

[2] The authenticity of this will has been disputed, but this question does not affect the value of the evidence it affords as to the female diaconate. It may be read in Migne, *Patr. Lat.* lxv. p. 973.

may conclude that the female diaconate was encouraged by him, notwithstanding the prohibitions of local synods. From Hilaria, the daughter of a bishop, we turn to S. Rhadegund, the wife of a king. Her story is well known, and helps to throw some light upon the position which Deaconesses occupied in Gaul, and the confusion which existed between them and the Widows. S. Rhadegund was a Thuringian princess, and had been captured in war when quite a child, by the Frankish king, Clothaire I., who afterwards made her his wife. The marriage was a most unhappy one. The tastes of the royal pair were utterly opposed, and the king, who had several other wives, complained that he had married a nun. After some years of domestic discord, a final breach was caused by the murder of Rhadegund's only brother by Clothaire. The queen left the court, and fled to Noyon, and besought Bishop Medard to 'consecrate her to the Lord.' Fearing the king's wrath, the bishop hesitated, on the ground that she was a married woman; whereupon Rhadegund 'went into the Sacrarium, put on a monastic habit, and proceeding to the altar addressed the blessed Medard as follows: "If thou shalt refuse to consecrate me, and shalt fear men rather than God, let the soul of the sheep be required of the shepherd at thy hand." Smitten

by this solemn adjuration, he laid his hand on her, and consecrated her Deaconess.'[1] Through the mediation of Bishop Germanus, the king was induced to consent to the separation, and Rhadegund retired to Poitiers, where she founded a nunnery. She was not herself the Abbess, but lived as a simple nun, renowned for her saintliness, and consulted by the chief rulers of the State. She died in 587 A.D., and was buried with great honour by Gregory, Bishop of Tours, who wrote an account of her funeral.[2] Her life was written by another of her friends, the poet-bishop Fortunatus. It seems clear from this whole story that Rhadegund sought the office of Deaconess simply as a protection from her husband. She could not be consecrated as a Virgin, and she feared that the mere assumption of the Widow's habit would not suffice.[3] There was, as we have seen no consecration of Widows by a Bishop, hence she pressed for consecration as a Deaconess. Her biographers do not say that she fulfilled any diaconal functions, nor do they regard the office

[1] *Manu superposita consecravit diaconam. Acta Sanctorum*, Aug. 13, p. 70.

[2] Greg. Tur. *De Gloria Confessorum*, c. 106.

[3] The second Counc. of Tours enacted that the simple change of garb denoting a solemn purpose of widowhood, was sufficient to guarantee the protection of the Church; but this would hardly hold good in the case of a married woman.

as conferring any special honour upon her. Rhadegund's admission to the diaconate took place in the year 544 A.D., eleven years after the Order had been condemned for the third time by the second Council of Orleans. It had thus, in spite of prohibitions, maintained its existence in Gaul for over a hundred years, but it is evident that at this time the office was becoming obsolete. The second Council of Tours, twenty-three years later, gives the title *Diaconissa* to the wives of the Deacons,[1] which seems to show that the true Deaconess had disappeared. The Widow again takes her place. It is probably to this period that the before-mentioned statute belongs which orders Widows to be 'chosen for ministry at the baptism of women.'

[1] It uses the terms *episcopa*, *presbytera*, *diaconissa* and *subdiaconissa* (can. xiii., xix.) For a similar use of some of these terms see the canons of the Counc. of Rome, 720 A.D.

CHAPTER V

THE POSITION AND WORK OF THE PRIMITIVE DEACONESS

THE insight which we have been able to obtain into the life of the Church in the fourth century has shown us that while she everywhere made use of the service of women, the form of their ministry differed widely in the East and in the West. We have seen that the female diaconate belonged at this time chiefly, if not exclusively, to the Eastern Church.

We have now to enquire what exactly was the position occupied by the Deaconess, and what were the services she rendered in the Early Church. Happily the answers to these questions are to be found in some of the early documents relating to ecclesiastical order and discipline which refer to this period.[1]

First, then, as to the duties of the Deaconess. The general principle is laid down at the outset in

[1] Some account of these documents, and of their historical value, is given by the Dean of Wells in Appendix A, where the extracts made in this chapter from the texts will be found.

the words of the *Syriac Didascalia*, which directs the Bishop to 'appoint Deacons: a man as for the doing of many things that are needed, and a woman as for the ministration to the women.' The work of the Deaconess lay primarily among those of her own sex, and her service was specially needed in the East, where women lived in greater seclusion than did their sisters in the West. The most important of the functions of the Deaconess was that which related to the administration of baptism. The rites connected with this sacrament were elaborate. Immersion was preceded by the anointing of the whole body. Where the candidates were women this ceremony was performed by the Deaconess. She also received them as they came up out of the water, and to her was committed their further instruction in the faith.

Another of her principal duties was the visitation of the women in their homes. These early ordinances state that 'to the houses of the heathen, where there are women that believe, it is required that a Deaconess should go in and visit those that are sick, and minister to them in whatsoever may be required for them.' Hospitals were unknown in those days, and nursing would probably occupy a considerable share of the Deaconess's time. She like the Deacon was also the Church's almoner, reporting

cases of distress to the Bishop, and distributing to each 'the ministration that is right.' In the case of women who were unable through sickness to attend the services of the Church, it was the duty of the Deaconess to take the consecrated bread and wine to them. No doubt much of the teaching of the women and children was entrusted to her, and she was the means of communication between them and the Bishop. The *Apostolic Constitutions* add to these duties that of door-keeper in the Church. It was customary in the East for the men and women to occupy separate parts of the Church, and it is directed that 'the doorkeepers should stand at the entrance of the men to guard them, and the Deaconesses at those of the women,' ready to welcome strangers, and find places for them. This duty is referred to also in the epistle to the Antiochians falsely ascribed to Ignatius:[1] the writer, after saluting all the other Church officials, continues, 'I greet the guardianesses of the holy gates, the Deaconesses in Christ.' There is no indication that they had at this time any other service within the Church, though at a later period we read of their cleansing the sanctuary, lighting the lamps,

[1] Lightfoot, *Ignat.*, vol. ii. p. 825 f. This epistle was probably written about the same time, if not by the same hand, as the final edition of the *Apostolic Constitutions*.

preparing the sacramental bread and wine, and even administering 'the consecrated cup when necessity demands.'[1]

Epiphanius gives a brief summary of the duties of the women-deacons, saying that they were 'appointed for ministration to women only, for that which is seemly, if need may arise, on account of the laver (*i.e.* baptism) or the visitation of the sick.'[2] He here emphasizes the two chief functions of the office; but it is clear that the Deaconess's work was not limited to these. The *Apostolic Constitutions* show that there was ample scope for her activity. Its directions as to the duties of the men and women deacons conclude with the words: 'let both of them [be zealous] in matters concerning bearing tidings, travelling, service and bond service.' These expressions suggest a wide sphere of usefulness and recall to our minds the Deaconess Phoebe of the Apostolic age, travelling from Corinth to Rome.

Such were the services rendered by the Deaconess. What then was her position among the ministers of the Church? A careful comparison of the documents we possess shows that this varied at different periods. The further back we

[1] Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, vol iii., pt. ii. p. 849. See Appendix B.

[2] *Expositio Fidei* n. 21. Dind. vol. iii. p. 583.

get, the higher is the conception of the office of the Deaconess. She is regarded equally with the Deacon as the servant of the Bishop, who delegates to both alike his responsibility for the sick and poor of his flock. But as the simplicity of the earlier order gives place to the more elaborate rules of the later records, a change is apparent in the position of both the men and women Deacons. The status of the former gradually rises. Partly owing to the rule which in some Churches restricted their number to seven, and partly on account of their close association with the Bishop, their influence and importance greatly increased. Other inferior officers were appointed, who undertook many of the duties which they had hitherto performed. They themselves were the personal attendants of the Bishop, acting as his secretaries and chaplains; and their office was not unfrequently a stepping-stone to the episcopate. While the Deacon was thus rising in importance, the position of the Deaconess gradually fell. The sub-deacons and readers who obtained a place in the 'cleros' helped to widen the distance between her and the Deacon. The *Apostolic Constitutions*[1] regard her as his assistant, appointed to discharge those duties

[1] These *Constitutions* have been variously assigned by different writers to the third, fourth, and fifth centuries. (See, however, Appendix A.)

to the women which he was unable to perform. They do not emphasize so strongly as the earlier ordinances do the direct personal relation in which she stood to the Bishop.

But even at this later date the position of the Deaconess is a very honourable one. It is clear that the Church gave her a recognised place in the 'cleros.' Her ordination is as carefully provided for as that of the Deacon; and a special form of prayer[1] is prescribed, which is not found in the case of the other inferior clergy. Her official status is recognised also in the rules which direct that she should receive the Eucharist immediately after the clergy, and that she should share with them the remains of the consecrated elements. The *Apostolic Constitutions* also mark clearly the distinction between the Deaconess and other women holding any position in the Church. In the directions given concerning Widows, they are admonished to be obedient not only to the Bishop, the Presbyters and the Deacons, but also to the Deaconesses. We have already seen them presiding over the Virgins, and here their authority is extended to the Widows. That which distinguished them from both these classes is explained in the *Apostolic Constitutions*. The Widow and the Virgin are 'not ordained,' whereas the ordina-

[1] For the text of this prayer, see Appendix A.

tion of the Deaconess is expressly enjoined and provided for.

There is little doubt that the rite by which women were admitted to the Diaconate was regarded by the Church as Ordination. The Greek words (χειροτονία and χειροθεσία) used to describe it are the same as those employed in respect to the rest of the clergy. Thus Sozomen states that 'Nectarius ordained (ἐχειροτόνησεν) Olympias,'[1] and the two General Councils of the fourth and fifth centuries which mention Deaconesses prove that such ordination was the custom of the Church. The first of these Councils, that of Nicæa (325 A.D.), when dealing with the Paulianist heretics, and their readmission into the Church, directs that their clergy should, if found worthy, be ordained afresh. Then it continues (can. xix.): 'touching the Deaconesses, and generally all who are reckoned on the clerical staff, the same standard is to be retained.' The direction which follows respecting the ex-Paulianist Deaconesses has been the subject of much controversy; but most modern commentators[2] are agreed in explaining it to mean that, as these women had been admitted to the office of Deaconess without the laying on of hands, they could in no sense be

[1] Sozomen, *H. E.* viii. 9.

[2] So Neander, Stokes, Littledale, Ludlow, Howson, etc.

regarded as ordained, and were to be reckoned among the laity.[1] This decision implies that the Catholic Deaconesses were ordained and reckoned among the clergy. More than a century later, their position as part of the ordered ministry of the Church is again recognised by the General Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.), which speaks of them as 'ordained' by 'imposition of hands.'[2] Even those local councils in Gaul,[3] which forbade any more Deaconesses to be ordained, prove that such ordination had been the practice of the Bishops. How solemn and formal this ordination was may be seen from the service in use in the Church of Constantinople. It is conducted on exactly the same lines as the ordination of a Deacon. The Bishop, laying his hand upon the head of 'her that is being ordained,' prays that she may receive 'the grace of the Holy Spirit' even as Phoebe, who was 'called to the work of the ministry.' He then invests her with the diaconal stole, and afterwards places in her hands the chalice, which she puts back upon the Holy Table. Dr Littledale, who has translated this service (cf. Appendix B.) says: 'the use of the

[1] For a discussion of this point, see the extract from Dr Bright's *Notes on the Canons* in Appendix C.

[2] Can. xv.

[3] First Council of Orange, c. xxvi.; Council of Epaone, c. xxi.; second Council of Orleans, c. xviii. (see above, pp. 58, 59).

diaconal stole and the right of handling the holy vessels and entering the "Bema" mark the Deaconess off as of higher ecclesiastical rank than the sub-deacon, to whom both these privileges were forbidden by the Council of Laodicea. The Greek Church calls the greater Orders those "within the Bema," and the lesser "without the Bema."' Dr Ludlow, when commenting upon the laws of Justinian which refer to Deaconesses, remarks that there is not 'the smallest trace in the authorities of a generic difference between the ordination of the Deaconess and that of the other members of the clergy, the word ordination (see, for instance, Nov. vi.) being strictly rendered in the Greek version by the technical one of χειροθεσία, laying on of hands. The same terms of 'most reverend' and 'venerable' are applied to Deaconesses, as to the Bishops and other clergy (see Novs. iii., vi.); the rules respecting them are comprised in the same ordinances of the civil power (Cod. bk. i. tits. 2, 3; Novs. iii., vi.), and their rank clearly fixed on a par with that of the Deacons, and before the sub-deacons and other inferior clergy (Nov. iii.).'[1]

Closely allied to the question of the sacred character of the office, is that of the life-long dedication required of the Deaconess. The

[1] *Woman's Work in the Church*, p. 58 f.

earliest extant documents are silent on the subject of the marriage of the clergy, but the writer of the *Apostolic Constitutions* lays down definite rules with regard to it. He would permit Bishops, Priests, and Deacons to have married before ordination, 'but let a Deaconess be a pure virgin; but if not, then a widow once married, faithful and honourable.'[1] Probably this rule had held good with regard to the Deaconess from very early times, and was independent of the growth of the unhealthy sentiment which regarded the celibacy of the clergy as essential to their sacred calling. For in the case of the Deaconess it was a question of practical utility. The service for which she was set apart demanded that she should be free from all other ties. To marry, therefore, was with her equivalent to leaving the ministry. The Council of Chalcedon enacted[2] that if a Deaconess, 'after having received ordination, and continued a time at her service, shall give herself in marriage, doing despite to the grace of God, let such an one be anathematised with him that is joined unto her.' The rule of celibacy seems to

[1] Compare Epiphanius, who adds a third class, viz., women 'once married living in continence,' *Expos. Fidei.* n. 21. So later on the Council of Trullo (692 A.D.) permitted the admission of the wives of Bishops to the diaconate (see above, p. 42).

[2] Can. xv. See also second Council of Orleans, c. xvii. (quoted above, p. 59).

have been strict, and the penalties inflicted on those who broke it became very severe. The Emperor Justinian in his code of laws goes so far as to pass sentence of death upon both the Deaconess and her husband (Nov. vi.) Such laws show how strong was the feeling as to the sacredness of the office. They certainly appear to indicate that the 'character' conferred on the Deaconess at her ordination was regarded as indelible. At the same time there is nothing to show that the Deaconess took any vows, nor is there any trace of them in the ancient ordination services. The solemn consecration at the hands of the Bishop seems to have been considered sufficiently binding without any formal vow.

As a safeguard against a want of stedfastness on the part of those holding this office, the age fixed for admission was much more advanced than that required for the rest of the clergy. The Emperor Theodosius (390 A.D.) enacted that none should be accepted save such as were sixty years of age, and had borne children.[1] This seems to remind us of the Western confusion between the Deaconess and the Widow; for it is said to be 'according to the precepts of the Apostle.' The Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) fixed the age at forty, after 'careful testing,' and this decision is

[1] *Cod. Theod.* xvi., ii. 27.

repeated by the Council in Trullo, at the close of the seventh century. Justinian, in his earlier laws, named fifty as the lowest age, but afterwards fixed it at forty. No doubt the Bishops varied it at their discretion. Olympias is described as a young widow at the time of her ordination.

The primitive Deaconesses were attached to separate Churches, their number, as in the case of the Deacons, being 'proportionate to the size of the congregation.'[1] The staff of Clergy at the Church of S. Sophia, in Constantinople, was fixed by Justinian (Nov. iii.), at sixty Priests, a hundred Deacons, and forty Deaconesses, while six Deaconesses were attached to a small Church in the suburbs. These 'parochial' Deaconesses appear to have lived singly, or in small groups. 'The Deaconess,' says Bishop Lightfoot,[2] 'was not a member of a community, but the officer of a congregation.' 'I think,' he adds, 'that the female Deacon must, in this respect, have stood on exactly the same level as the male Deacon.' One of the laws of Justinian enacts that the Deaconess shall live either alone or with her parents, children, or brothers. Should she, however, from any reason, have been ordained before the prescribed age, she is to remain in some

[1] *Apost. Const.*, Bk. iii. 19.
[2] Speech in Convocation of York. July 15, 1884.

'ascetery,' (Nov. vi.). It is probable that in many nunneries a Deaconess occupied the position of 'choir mistress,' or head of the band of Virgins, as in the case of Publia at Antioch, and Lampadia at Annesi. Olympias also presided over a community of young women.

In legal matters the Deaconess was included in the same rules as other clerical persons, and was under the jurisdiction of the Bishop. The code of Theodosius enacted that if the Deaconess had children under age, she must appoint a guardian for them, and must entrust the management of her property to others, though continuing to receive the income herself. She might not alienate any of her jewels or furniture for religious purposes, nor might she bequeath her property to any church, cleric, or poor person. These latter clauses were, however, repealed by Justinian,[1] who left the Deaconess free to dispose of her property as she pleased.

The large amount of attention given to the Deaconesses in these codes, shows how widespread and influential their order was. It evidently numbered among its members many women of wealth and importance. Indeed, so

[1] For an account of the code of Justinian, see Dr J. M. Ludlow's *Woman's Work in the Church*, pp. 51, ff., where the civil law respecting Deaconesses is fully and ably treated.

honourable was the office, that there seems to have been a danger lest some of those who held it should overstep the natural limits of their sex, and the need arose of defining clearly the scope of their ministry. The *Apostolic Constitutions* point out that 'a Deaconess does not bless; neither does she perform any of those things which the Presbyters or the Deacons do, save only the keeping of the gates, and the ministering to the Presbyters in the baptism of women, for the sake of that which is seemly.' Epiphanius also, when condemning the heresy of the Collyridians, who intruded women into the priesthood, says: 'There is an order of Deaconesses in the Church, yet it is not for priestly service, nor for any such thing, but for the sake of that which is seemly in regard to womankind, either at the time of the laver (*i.e.* baptism), or of the visitation of sickness or suffering . . . but it must be observed that the needs of the Ecclesiastical Order extend only to Deaconesses, and that it hath those whom it names Widows, and the yet older of these πρεσβύτιδας (aged women); but nowhere hath it appointed πρεσβυτερίδας (Presbyteresses) or ἱερίσσας (Priestesses).'[1] This passage throws some light upon a canon of the Council of Laodicea which was held about the end of the

[1] *Hær. Collyr.* 79, n. 3.

fourth century, the same period during which Epiphanius was writing. The canon states 'that it is not right that those who are called πρεσβύτιδες or presiding women be appointed in the Church.' This has been taken by some commentators to refer to Deaconesses, and has been quoted to show that their ordination was forbidden. But by πρεσβύτιδες Epiphanius, as we see, understood the most venerable of the Widows, who were quite distinct from the Deaconesses.[1] It would seem that a custom had prevailed in certain parts of appointing some of the most important of the Widows to the post of female Elder, to preside over the other women in the Church. This custom was condemned by the Council of Laodicea, whose canons do not once mention Deaconesses.

It may be well to note here that the female diaconate was never forbidden by any Eastern Council, nor, with the exception of a few local synods in Gaul, was it ever abolished by the Western Church. Gradually, as we shall see, owing to the changed conditions of Church life, the office fell into disuse, and the Deaconess

[1] With this may be compared a passage in the *De Virginitate*, falsely ascribed to S. Athanasius (§ 11): 'But thou, if thou followest not youthful ways, art not called younger (νεωτέρα, in reference to 1 Tim. v. 11), but art named πρεσβῦτις, and hast honour as πρεσβυτέρα.'

passed out of sight. But she, like the maiden in the miracle, was 'not dead but sleeping': her office lay dormant, until the time came when 'the new life which God has given to His Church in England in these last days should call back out of the past this beautiful form of Ministry.'[1]

[1] Sermon by Professor Robinson, preached at S. Paul's, Clapham, Jan. 25, 1894.

CHAPTER VI

A REVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE DEACONESS

WE have been occupied thus far in striving to obtain a clear view of the office of Deaconess, at that period of its history for which the materials are most abundant. We must now go back and try to gather up the threads of the history of the Institution from the Apostolic age, and then endeavour to carry it down to the present day.

The earliest mention of the female diaconate outside the New Testament, comes from a heathen writer. It occurs in the famous correspondence between the statesman Pliny and the emperor Trajan, at the beginning of the second century.[1] Pliny, who was at the time governor of Bithynia, writes to his master to know how he is to deal with the Christians who are constantly being brought to him for trial. His rule hitherto has been to question them three times, and, if they refused to

[1] Plin. *Epp.* 66, 67. Lightfoot states that 'Pliny's letter was written in the autumn or winter of A.D. 112.' (*Ignatius*, i. 56).

renounce Christianity, he has 'ordered them to execution.' But the 'number of persons endangered' has caused him to hesitate. 'For many persons, of all ages, all ranks, even of both sexes, are and will be called into peril. Not only the cities, but the villages even, and the country are traversed by the contagion of this superstition.' He has tried to find out exactly what the tenets of the sect are, and has been told by certain renegades who had abandoned their faith that they 'had been accustomed to meet on a fixed day before it was light, and to sing alternately among themselves a hymn to Christ as if to a God; and to bind themselves by a sacred oath not to the commission of any crime, but that they should not commit thefts and robberies and adulteries, that they should not break their pledge, nor deny a deposit when called upon to restore it: and that when all this was done they had been in the habit of departing and meeting again to take food, but food of an ordinary and innocent kind.' This was the statement made by those who had renounced these practices. Pliny wanted corroborative evidence. 'I thought it therefore the more necessary to try and find the truth of the matter by torture as well, (and that) from two female slaves (*ancillae*) who were called Deaconesses(*ministrae*).

I discovered nothing more than a perverse and contumacious superstition.' Thus did those two martyr Deaconesses, while bearing their faithful witness for Christ, unconsciously afford to future generations a valuable testimony of the existence of their order in the post-apostolic age.

A passage from another heathen writer, the Greek satirist Lucian,[1] is sometimes quoted as evidence of the ministry of Deaconesses to the confessors in prison. No doubt this would form part of their work in times of persecution, but we cannot prove it from the words of Lucian, which speak not of Deaconesses, but of 'elderly women.'

The first Christian writers who mention the office are Clement of Alexandria (*circ.* 150-220) and Origen (185-254). The former refers to S. Paul's rules concerning 'ministering women' (or 'women-deacons,' *διακόνων γυναικῶν*). He is speaking of the 'fellow-ministers' (*συνδιάκονοι*), whom the Apostles took about with them 'not as wives but as sisters.'[2] Origen, in his Commentary to the Romans,[3] says that 'this passage (Rom. xvi. 1, 2) shews that women also were set in the ministry of the Church; in which office Phoebe

[1] *De Morte Peregr.* iii. 335.
[2] *Strom.* iii. 6, I. p. 536.
[3] Bk. x. § 17.

was placed in the Church which is in Cenchreæ.' But neither of these Fathers alludes to the existence of the Order in his own time. Ignatius and Polycarp and other early writers are entirely silent on the subject, and Tertullian is occupied only with Widows and Virgins.

Our knowledge of the female diaconate, from the year 112 A.D. to the beginning of the fourth century, is therefore dependent upon those documents which are embodied in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, and which certainly carry us back to a very primitive condition of Church order. In their original form they may be placed, perhaps, early in the third century.[1] But between this date and Pliny's letter, we have a hundred years of silence. This silence may be due in part to the fact that the locality to which we should look with most expectation of finding evidence is Palestine and Syria, and for that locality we are specially poor in documents during the period in question. The great writers, Irenæus and Tertullian, Clement and Origen, belong to Churches in which we have no evidence at all, or none until a much later date, of the existence of the Institution. But the silence of Ignatius and Polycarp is remarkable, and brings us face to face with a real difficulty, which admits

[1] See Appendix A.

of two explanations. Either (1) there was no continuous existence of the female diaconate in the strict sense, but in the third century the needs of the Church called for a revival of the office, and justified that revival by the words of S. Paul's Epistles. Or (2) the Order was in fact continuously in existence, though no occasion occurred to refer to it in the scanty literature which has survived from the locality to which we naturally look in our search for evidence.

It is not easy, and perhaps it is not important, to come to a decision between these two alternatives. If the first be the true one, then we have a parallel in early times to what has happened in later times. The Church has awoke to the fact that she has been neglecting to use a ministration which has Apostolic sanction, and which is demanded by the practical necessities which bid her put forth all her strength. But the second alternative has at least an equal claim to acceptance. There is not in later writings the slightest hint of such a lapse and revival of the Order, nor any suggestion of a comparatively recent origin for the institution of the female diaconate at the time when the early rules which underlie the *Apostolic Constitutions* were framed.

The literature of the next period, as we have seen, abounds with references to the office of

Deaconess. It is legislated for in two of the general Councils, and is mentioned by all the leading Greek Fathers and historians of the fourth and fifth centuries. Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Epiphanius, Chrysostom, Theodoret and Sozomen all bear testimony to the flourishing condition of the Order. They have preserved to us the personal history of several of its members, and have shown how important was the position they occupied and the service they rendered in the Church.

In following the history we have tried to note carefully the geographical limits within which the early Deaconesses are to be found, and we have observed that before the fifth century they belong chiefly, if not exclusively, to the East. And it is here that we meet with them in the largest numbers during the succeeding centuries. There is, however, one Deaconess whose locality we cannot fix with certainty. This is Syncletica, to whom Eustathius, her brother, dedicated his Latin translation of S. Basil's Commentary on the 'Six Days of Creation.'[1] She was a remarkable woman, for the poet Sedulius speaks of her to Macedonius[2] as one to whom any writer might be proud to dedicate his work. He says she

[1] Cassiod. *Divin. Lect.* cap. 2, in Migne, P. L. lxx. 1110.
[2] Dedicatory letter to *Carmen Paschale.*

was of noble blood, and so learned a theologian as to be capable of teaching, did not her sex forbid. He speaks of her as Virgin and Deaconess (*ministra*). Her date is about 440 A.D., but there is nothing to shew to what Church she belonged.

We next meet with two Deaconesses in correspondence with Severus, Patriarch of Antioch, at the beginning of the sixth century. His letters to them are preserved in Syriac,[1] one being addressed to 'the Deaconess and Abbess Valeriana,' and the other to 'the Deaconess and Abbess Jannia.' (The word here translated 'Abbess' is the Syriac term for the head of a convent). Another of this Bishop's correspondents was Anastasia. Of her we are told:[2] 'This then was Anastasia, the patrician, the Deaconess. She was in the days of the holy man of God, Severus the Patriarch; and he wrote many letters to her, full of solutions of the questions which she asked when she was in the convent with the sisters, before she went into the desert of Scete.'[3] Only one of these

[1] Wright's *Cat. of Syr. MSS.* II. 567.

[2] Wright's *Cat. of Syr. MSS.* III. 1109.

[3] It seems probable that the history of this Deaconess has been confounded with that of the famous Anastasia Patricia, who is mentioned in the Greek *Menaea* (Mar. 10.) The latter is said to have fled from Constantinople in the time of Justinian, and to have founded a convent in Egypt. Afterwards she retired to the Abbot Daniel's monastery, where she lived as Anastasius the monk.

letters is in existence. It is preserved in Coptic, and contains an explanation of a passage in the Gospels.[1]

The Deaconess Regina also belongs to the sixth century. Her cousin was a Prefect of Constantinople, and had embraced the heresy of the Monophysites. Regina persuaded him to accompany her to Jerusalem, to visit S. John the Silentiary.[2] It was impossible for her to visit the recluse, but she sent her cousin to him. The saint was the means of converting him from his heresy, through the prayers of 'Regina, Deaconess of the great church of Constantinople.'[3]

An incidental notice of the work of the Deaconess occurs in the writings of John Moschus, who died about 620 A.D. His book, *The Spiritual Meadow,* is a collection of 'stories of Holy Monks.' One of these stories relates how Conon, a monk of the monastery of Pentoucla (*i.e.* Pentacla, near the Jordan) was set by his brethren, on account of his holiness, to administer baptism. He felt great difficulty with regard to the anointing of women, and at last refused to perform the ceremony. 'The Archbishop Peter hearing of it wished to appoint a Deaconess for this purpose,

[1] Zoega, *Cat. Cod. Cop.* p. 112.
[2] *Acta Sanct.* xiii., May 3, 232.
[3] Baron. *Ann.* 515 A.D., Nos. 30, 31.

but did not, because the place would not admit of it.' S. Conon fled, but was met and sent back by S. John the Baptist, who overcame his scruples. Archbishop Peter was Patriarch of Jerusalem in the first half of the sixth century. Thus we see that at this period it seemed natural to a Bishop in Palestine to appoint a Deaconess to assist at the baptism of women. The reason it was not done in this case was probably because the place was only a monastery for men.

Another valuable piece of evidence in regard to the female diaconate in the sixth century is the epitaph of the Deaconess Theodora, found at Ticinum[1] (*i.e.* Pavia). It runs as follows:—

† † †

HERE · RESTS · IN · PEACE
THEODORA · THE · DEACONESS
OF · BLESSED · MEMORY
SHE · LIVED · IN · THE · WORLD
FORTY · EIGHT · YEARS · MORE · OR · LESS
AND · WAS · LAID · TO · REST
ON · THE · TWENTY · SECOND · OF · JULY
IN · THE · YEAR
FIVE · HUNDRED · AND · THIRTY - NINE

☧ ☧

Nothing more is known of Theodora, but it is

[1] Muratori, *Antiquities of Italy* (Milan ed. 1741), vol. v. p. 571 f. (Dissert. lxvi.).

interesting to note that Pavia was the place where the celebrated Bishop Ennodius died in 521 A.D., when she was thirty years of age.

This inscription takes us into Europe. We have seen that no proof can be given of the existence of Deaconesses in the West during the first four centuries. In the fifth century, however, we find them in Gaul, apparently in considerable numbers, though never sanctioned by local Church Councils. The inscription to Theodora shows that the office was known also in the north of Italy in the early part of the sixth century. How it was planted there we can only conjecture. Its introduction may be an instance of the influence which the Gallican Church exercised at this time upon the Italian : or it may have come direct from Constantinople at a somewhat earlier period, while the relations between East and West were still cordial. Of the history of the Order in the Western Church during the next two centuries we know nothing, but it evidently succeeded in establishing itself, for at the close of the eighth century we meet with Deaconesses for the first time at Rome. The mention of them occurs in the life of Leo III. written by Anastasius.[1] In the year 799 A.D. the Pope had been seized and carried off by his enemies. He was quickly rescued by his friends,

[1] *Migne* P. L. 128, col. 1215 f.

and on his return to the city, we are told, the whole Roman populace, including 'nuns, deaconesses and noble matrons' went out to meet him at the Milvian gate. This incidental notice of Roman Deaconesses is most interesting, and it helps to explain the fact that in Muratori's 'Antiquities of Italy,' a service is to be found, entitled 'the making of a Deaconess.' (See Appendix B.) The Roman Pontifical in use at the present day also contains an allusion to the 'diaconissate,'[1] thus bearing witness to its existence in the past. Evidently the office was recognised at one time by the Church of Rome, and it appears to have lasted on in the West for several centuries,[2] for we meet with it again towards the close of the tenth century. The reference, which occurs in the Greek life of S. Nilus,[3] shows us a Deaconess at the head of a convent in Capua. Probably by this time the Western Deaconess was entirely monastic, and hardly distinguishable from the nuns among whom she lived.

To return to the East: we have seen how much attention is devoted to the female diaconate in the laws of Justinian. The Order continued

[1] See below, p. 98.

[2] Moreri states that it lasted longer in Spain than in Gaul, but he gives no authority.

[3] *Acta SS.* Sept. 26, p. 330. Baron. *Eccles. Hist.* xvi. p. 206.

to flourish at Constantinople. Theophanes states[1] that in the reign of the Emperor Maurice, a new Church was built there by the Patriarch Cyriacus, and named the 'Deaconess Church,' and Codinus adds that it was so called in honour of the Patriarch's sister, who held the office of Deaconess.[2] In the seventh century, the Emperor Heraclius, writing to the Patriarch Sergius, speaks of forty Deaconesses attached to the Church of S. Sophia. Of their history during the next three centuries we know almost nothing. The Order would seem to have gradually declined, becoming overshadowed by the great religious houses. Still there is proof of its continued existence in several places. Among the Christian inscriptions of Asia Minor are to be found the names of Deaconesses.[3] Thus we find one in Phrygia Pacatiana to 'Epiphania, Deaconess:' another in Pisidia Anatolica to 'Conon, Presbyter, and Kyria, Deaconess,' and a third to 'Atiane, Deaconess, and her brother.' Further search would probably reveal many more. The most interesting epitaph that has

[1] p. 428, B. ad. ann. 596.

[2] *De aedif. C. P.* p. 53. Michael Attaliotes in the eleventh century speaks of 'the public porch of the Deaconesses.' It is stated that this Church still exists as a mosque, and that the archway leading to it bears the name of the 'Deaconess Archway.' (cf. *Church Bells*, no. 743, March 20, 1885.)

[3] *Mélanges d'Archéol.* 1895, pp. 245, ff. The first three inscriptions read διακόνισσα, the last, διάκονος.

yet been found is that to Aeria at Hellenopontus Amisus.[1] It runs thus :—

HERE · RESTS
THE · EVER · TO · BE · REMEMBERED
HANDMAID · OF · CHRIST · AERIA
WHICH · WAS · DEACONESS · OF · THE · SAINTS
THE · FRIEND · OF · ALL
SHE · PASSED · TO · REST
THE · THIRD · OF · JANUARY · 1086.

This beautiful tribute to a Deaconess of the eleventh century sounds like an echo from more primitive days. The expression 'Deaconess of the Saints' would seem to indicate that Aeria was an active 'servant of the Church,' and not simply a member of a convent. The same expression is used of others of the clergy; thus we read of 'Theodore, Presbyter of the Saints, the Friend of all.'[2] Aeria is the latest Deaconess whose name has come down to us. From this time all the information we possess about the Order is drawn from the statements of Canonists of the middle ages. Their evidence shows that the practice of the Church varied in different parts. Balsamon, Patriarch of Antioch about 1070 A.D., states[3] that Deaconesses had ceased

[1] *Ibid. Inscrip.* 409. [2] *Inscrip.* 354.
[3] *Juris Orientalis*, Bk. iii., response to interrogations.

to exist in his Church, but that they were still appointed at Constantinople. Again, when commenting on the fifteenth canon of the Council of Chalcedon, he says: 'The matters treated in the present canon are wholly obsolete. For there is no ordination of a Deaconess in the present day, even if, by a misuse of words, certain nuns (*ἀσκητρίαι*) are called Deaconesses (*διακόνισσαι*).' This statement cannot, however, be accepted as final, for Michael, Patriarch of the Jacobites at the close of the twelfth century, while saying in his Pontifical that Deaconesses had ceased in the Church, yet empowers Bishops in case of urgent necessity to ordain them.[1] Matthew Blastares, writing about 1335 A.D., quotes a service for the ordination of a Deaconess,[2] but in another place he says: 'what ministry these women-deacons then fulfilled in the Church scarcely any one now knows, except that some say that they ministered in the baptizing of women.'[3] Almost the only Western writer who deals with the subject is Atto, Bishop of Vercelli, in the tenth century. He had been asked by Ambrosius, Presbyter of Milan, to explain a passage in Pope Zachary's decretals

[1] Quoted from Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, vol. iii. pt. ii. p. 849.

[2] Matt. Blast. c. xi., *τοῦ Γ στοιχείου*, see Appendix B.

[3] Quoted in note to Cotelerius, *Patr. Apost.* vol. i. p. 290.

concerning 'Presbytera' and 'Diacona.'[1] He replies with an antiquarian dissertation of some length, in which he says that he believes that 'the fewness of the labourers,' in early times, caused the promotion of women to preside over the Church. 'For as those who were called *Presbyterae* had acquired the office of preaching, commanding or teaching, so surely *Diaconae* the office of ministering or baptizing; which in the present day is very far from expedient.' If the latter title is to be retained at all, he would propose to give it to the women who clean the churches. He adds, later, what is undoubtedly the true explanation,[2] that the words may be understood to refer to the 'wives of Presbyters and Deacons, whom they had married before their ordination.'[3] These remarks show a strange ignorance on the part of a learned man, with regard to primitive usages. One thing is clear, that Bishop Atto had never seen a Deaconess. Yet Macer states that in his day[4] the office still existed in the metropolitan Church of Milan. Both in East and West it

[1] *Decretals* of Pope Zachary, ch. iii., (741-751, A.D.) 'Ut neque Presbyteram neque Diaconam nec Commatrem spiritalem quis in coniugium ducat.'

[2] So in the Greek and Russian Churches at the present day the wife of a Deacon bears the title of Deaconess.

[3] D'Achery, *Spicilegium*, (Paris, 1723) I. 458.

[4] *Hierolexicon sub verbo Diaconissa.* Macer died in 1671 A.D.

lingered till a very late date. The Pontifical of the Nestorians in 1559 A.D., contains a service for the ordination of Deaconesses,[1] and Richard,[2] writing in the eighteenth century, says that vestiges of the office still remained in certain Churches in France. It is, however, only as part of the monastic system ; the Parochial Deaconess had long been a thing of the past. Her disappearance is thus accounted for by Iveninus : 'after the year 1000, not by the special decree of any council, but gradually and imperceptibly they disappeared ; and no wonder, since after that time (*a*) the great Easter and Pentecost baptisms were no longer observed : (*b*) infant baptism only was beginning to be practised, that of adults being very rare : (*c*) baptism by immersion had ceased except in a few provinces : (*d*) men and women no longer sat in separate parts of the Church. Accordingly, there was no need of Deaconesses for assisting at baptism or other rites.'[3] Their remaining duties were also being fulfilled by others. The Religious Houses helped the State in caring for the poor and nursing the sick ; and they were, moreover, the great centres of education. Thus the work of the Deaconess passed into the

[1] See Appendix B.
[2] *Analyse des Conciles*, vol. iii. p. 627 f.
[3] *Dissert.* ix., *Quaest.* v., Cap. ii.

hands of her younger sister the Nun; and though the Order lingered on, its original meaning was lost sight of, and it became purely monastic, the principal duty of its members being to read the Office in the Convent Chapel.

No doubt the rude character of the middle ages contributed to the decline of the Institution. The circumstances of the time were not favourable to the uncloistered Deaconess. The monk Lupus, seeking to explain her disappearance,[1] says, 'the Deaconess lived an active life, of which it is certain that women are incapable'! This monkish sentiment affords us an idea of the prejudices which beset women's work, and which, together with the lawlessness and misrule prevailing in the outer world, drove the Deaconess to seek the protection and seclusion of the convent.

It has been suggested that the Abbess is the lineal descendant of the Deaconess, and some historians favour this idea. Thus Thomassin says: 'There was at one time a solemn consecration of Deaconesses, but it seems to have passed over to the benediction of Abbesses, inasmuch as they are often called Deaconesses.'[2] Peter Abelard, writing in the twelfth century, speaks of the Abbess as Deaconess. Atto, on the other

[1] *Notæ in Canones*, vol. i.
[2] *Vet. et Nov. Eccl. Discip.* i. l. 3, c. 47, § 10.

hand, says: 'There are persons who have asserted that those were in early times called Diaconae whom we now call Abbesses; a view with which I do not at all agree.' Abbas, he says, means a Father, and implies respect: 'Diacona means no more than a servant.' It is probable that the two offices were often combined, but there is nothing to show that they were ever identical. Barhebraeus, in the thirteenth century says,[1] that it was a custom in the district of Antioch for an Abbess to be made a Deaconess, and to distribute the Eucharist to her nuns in the absence of the Priest or Deacon. Dr Littledale states[2] that the rite for ordaining Deaconesses 'was for a long time retained by the Bishops in the appointment and installation of Abbesses, in order that by placing persons of clerical rank at the head of the convents, these might be deprived of their lay character and independence, and be subjected to episcopal jurisdiction.' There is, however, no indication in the Roman Pontifical of the present day that the two offices are united. The Bishop, when laying his hands upon the head of the Abbess, prays that by the divine aid 'she may so continue in this "ministerium" as holy Stephen,

[1] Quoted by Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, vol. iii. pt. ii.

[2] *Offices from the Service Books of the Holy Eastern Church*, p. 152 f.

chosen Levite by the Apostles, was granted to abide.' Beyond this slight allusion, which occurs also in the prayer for the benediction of an Abbot, there is no other reference to the Diaconate. But the Roman office for the consecration of Virgins contains the following rubric: 'Because in certain monasteries it is the custom that, in the place of the "Diaconissate," to consecrated Virgins is given the faculty of leading the canonical hours, and reading the office in the Church, . . . the Bishop hands the breviary to them, who touch it with both their hands.' Nor is this the only trace of the Order which the Roman Church has preserved. It is stated in an article in the *Month*[1] (a Roman Catholic magazine) that the Carthusian nuns still receive the solemn consecration of 'Virgin Deaconess.' The writer explains that this consecration, which is regarded as 'a rare and exceedingly great privilege, . . . is exactly the same as that formerly bestowed upon the Deaconesses of the Primitive Church, and consequently the Carthusian nuns are vested in stole and maniple on the day of their consecration, and sing the Epistle at the conventual mass.' This rite is a heritage from the rule of S. Cesarius of Arles. The Bishop of the diocese alone is qualified to bestow this consecration, which is not

[1] June 1894, No. 360, p. 234.

accorded to any until they have been 'professed' five years.

In the Eastern Church also, the name at least, of the Deaconess has been preserved. Daniell states[1] that among the Maronites, Abbesses still receive the benediction and privileges of Deaconesses. And the Pontifical in use in the Syrian Church[2] contains a mention of the office. In its prayer for the consecration of Bishops the following words occur: 'that through the power of Thy gift he may make Priests and Deacons, Sub-deacons and Deaconesses for the ministry of Thy Holy Church.'

Thus both in East and West the name has been handed on, bearing witness to what was once a living part of the Church's ministry, and linking the past on to the present, when once again the life is beginning to flow through this 'ancient limb of the Church's organisation.'[3]

[1] *Codex Liturg.* iv. p. 698.

[2] Dean Maclean in his account of the East Syrian Christians says: 'There are now no Deaconesses. They are, however, recognised both in the 'Sunhadus' and the 'Heavenly Intelligences.'' In the latter book permission is accorded to the Deaconess both to anoint and baptize women, the Priest simply signing them with the sign of the cross. *The Catholicos of the East and his people.*

[3] Sermon by Professor Robinson, preached at S. Paul's, Clapham, Jan. 25, 1894. See also address by Bishop Davidson (then of Rochester), delivered at S. Saviour's, Southwark, Feb. 24, 1892.

CHAPTER VII

THE REVIVAL OF THE ORDER OF DEACONESSES

WE have traced the Deaconess from her birth in the Apostolic Church, catching glimpses of her in the dim half light of the succeeding centuries, till she emerges into full view in the Eastern Church of the fourth century. We have watched her at her work, and followed her as she travelled to other parts of the Church, as she struggled for existence in Gaul, and found a home for a time in Rome. We have seen her gradually recede from view, and her office fall into disuse, though her name lingered on. We have now to tell the story of how in these latter days, in response to the needs and the call of the Church, the Deaconess has reappeared, and taken up again that same ministry which was committed to her in the days of the Apostles.

In order to understand how the restoration of the office has been brought about, we must first glance briefly at the general revival of woman's work which has taken place in England during the present[1]

[1] *i.e.* the 19th.

century. It is difficult for those who have been reared amid the multiplied activities of the life of the last fifty years to realise what a total change has come about within two generations. In the records of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in England, woman's work is conspicuous by its absence. There is probably no other epoch in the history of the Church, in which so little use was made of the ministry of women. The Reformation, in sweeping away the great Religious Houses, had cut off the one existing form of woman's work outside the home circle. In spite of gross abuses, those houses had been valuable centres of education, charity, and devotion, which the Church could ill afford to lose. Possibly their destruction may have been partly compensated for by the freedom which the Reformed Church gave to her clergy to marry, and so gain the help of women in their pastoral work. There were, doubtless, unnumbered earnest Christian women leading lives of simple practical devotion, invaluable to the Church, though leaving no record behind them. But the history of the period shows that there was little scope or encouragement for the work of women generally. May not this have been one of the causes of the terrible lack of religious life which characterised the eighteenth century in England?

With the opening of the nineteenth century the

first signs of reawakening energy begin to show themselves. A few gifted and earnest women led the way, and opened up new paths for their sisters. Hannah More, whose life lay between the years 1745 and 1833, astonished the fashionable world in which she moved, by devoting herself to the cause of education among the poor, then almost totally neglected, by establishing schools, and providing healthy literature for the working classes. At the same time Elizabeth Fry and Sarah Martin were carrying on their still more difficult work among the prisoners, amid scenes of horror and misery which only the noblest courage and self-sacrifice could have endured. A great sphere for women's work was opening also with the growth of hospitals. There was an ever-increasing need of trained and devoted women, who would give themselves to the nursing of the sick. The great pioneer in this work was Florence Nightingale, whose splendid service in the Crimean war produced an outburst of national enthusiasm which did much to secure the success of her cause. She was supported by such women as Agnes Jones, the first lady who attempted nursing in workhouses, then almost as neglected as prisons, and Sister Dora, with countless other less known but hardly less devoted women, who looked upon their work as a sacred ministry.

Meanwhile a tide of fresh life and energy was rising in the English Church, stirring her to a sense of her responsibility to the rapidly increasing population of her town parishes, as well as to the deep though less crying needs of the country districts. She woke to find dense masses of human beings crowded together in great cities, for the most part uneducated, and almost untouched by Christian influence. Strive as they might, her clergy were quite unable to keep pace with the growing needs of their people, nor could they hope unaided to recover the ground which had been lost through past neglect. Then, in answer to the Church's call, volunteers sprang up on all sides, and once again, as in the Apostolic days, women took their places in the ranks, and devoted their lives to the Master's service. Various organisations were formed to grapple with the social and moral problems which encountered them, and in all of these women took their share. Sunday-Schools, District Visiting Societies, Mothers' Meetings, Night-Schools, Temperance Societies, Guilds, Clubs, and the multiplied parochial agencies, with which we are so familiar to-day, have most of them come into existence during the last fifty years. Few of them date further back than the life of our Queen; indeed there is perhaps nothing for which her reign has been more remarkable

than for the development of active Christian work, and especially of women's work, which it has witnessed. And with the quickened zeal of the Church at home came a fresh sense of her responsibility to the heathen world, and here too, as of old, women were among the first to carry the Gospel message to the foreign mission field.

As the sphere of their work widened, and the number of volunteers increased, the lack of definite organisation and the need of more co-operation among the workers began to be sorely felt. Much energy and devotion were being wasted for want of proper training and direction. The Church wanted women as well as men who could give themselves entirely to her service, free from all outside claims, and specially fitted and equipped for their work. It was in response to this need that the Sisterhoods arose.[1] The first was started by Miss Sellon at Devonport in 1847, and the ten years which followed saw the foundation of others which have since become famous at Oxford, Clewer and Wantage. The system supplied a felt need, and grew with marvellous rapidity. In 1878 it was

[1] Nor must the work of the Bible Women and Parochial Mission Women be overlooked. Not only have they rendered valuable service, but they prepared the way for the Parish Deaconess, and form to-day a most useful supplement to her work

stated in Convocation that the Sisters of the Anglican Church numbered between seven and eight hundred, and twenty years later their numbers are estimated at over two thousand. These Communities have rendered magnificent service to the Church, as centres both of devotional life and of practical usefulness. They led the way in caring for friendless and fallen women, and they have given invaluable help in the nursing of the sick and the education of the young. The influence they have won has been due above all to the self-sacrificing lives and the constant intercession of their members.

But grand as has been and is the work of the Sisterhoods, they could not fully meet the needs of the Church. Some other form of service was wanted, corresponding more closely with the parochial system. The Sister acted at the bidding of her Order; she was not under the direct control of the Bishop. Why should there not be other women, equally well disciplined and devoted, but serving directly under the Clergy; handmaids of the Church, receiving a share in her ministry, ready for service wherever they were needed? Was there not such an order of women-ministers in the Church in Apostolic times, and had it not continued at work during more than half the Christian era? If so, why should not the Church

in England return in this as in other matters to primitive usages, and restore an Institution which had proved so valuable in the first centuries? Such were the questions which a few thoughtful Churchmen began to ask themselves about forty years ago, and their enquiries were stimulated by the sight of what was being done by others outside our Communion. For the revival of Deaconesses in England was preceded by a similar movement among the Protestant Churches on the Continent.

In 1833 Pastor Fliedner founded the now famous Deaconess Institution at Kaiserswerth. Nor was this the first effort to establish the office among the Reformed Churches, for during the sixteenth century the female diaconate seems to have been officially recognised both in Holland and the Netherlands, though it appears to have died out again in the seventeenth century.[1] It is interesting to note that Pastor Fliedner received his first inspiration from Elizabeth Fry: but

[1] Dr Young's *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*, c. 26; Dr Fliedner, *Armen und Kranken Freund*, 1854. In England an attempt had been made by the Puritans to establish the office. Neal states that among the 'Conclusions' of Cartwright and Travers is one which directs that 'Deacons of both sorts,—viz., men and women,' are to be chosen by the Church for ministry among the poor, and to 'be received into their office with the general prayers of the Church.' *History of the Puritans*, vol. i. c. 6, ed. 1822.

the debt was fully repaid by the training which Florence Nightingale and other of our well-known women-workers received in his Deaconess Home. His system took root at once, and grew with astonishing rapidity. The mother-house at Kaiserswerth sent out branches in every direction, and within thirty years the workers numbered over 1200, with eighty-three stations, not only in Germany and on the Continent, but spreading as far as Jerusalem, Alexandria, Constantinople, and even to America. At the present day no Protestant Church on the Continent is without its communities of Deaconesses. The work they do consists chiefly of nursing and teaching, and they have the charge of Orphanages and Penitentiaries. A few of their members are sent out for parochial work, but as a whole their system corresponds far more closely to that of the Sisterhoods than to that of the primitive Deaconesses of the Church.

The revival of Deaconesses in England undoubtedly owes much to this earlier movement in Germany. For, although differing in some essential points, it did much to familiarise English Church people with this form of women's work, and to commend it to many who would otherwise have regarded the idea with distrust. Before, however, we pass on to the story of the first English Deaconesses, we must not omit to mention an

Institution which was the immediate outcome of the Kaiserswerth system. In 1860 the Rev. W. Pennefather started a small Missionary Training College for women at Barnet. After a few years it was removed by its founder to London, where it has grown into the well-known Community at Mildmay. Its workers receive training in nursing, teaching, and all kinds of parochial work, and they have rendered most valuable service both at home and abroad. Unhappily, by adopting the title of Deaconess without having received from the hands of the Bishop admission to the office, they have obscured the true meaning of the Order in the minds of many, and so increased the difficulties which have attended its revival.

The movement in Germany attracted also the attention of other English Churchmen, and they believed that such an Institution, founded on Church principles and following the lines laid down in primitive times, would meet the need which had been felt. The man to whom, perhaps more than to any other, we owe the restoration of the female diaconate was Dean Howson. He had a deep conviction of the immense value which an official ministry of women would be to the Church, and he set himself to try and realise his ideal. He first drew attention to the subject in a short paper published in the *Christian Observer* of 1858,

and he refers to the 'good humoured ridicule, the curious suspicion, and the puzzling misconceptions' which he had to encounter. His convictions were greatly strengthened by a visit to some of the Continental Deaconess Institutions, and in 1860 he wrote an article in the *Quarterly Review* which brought the subject prominently into notice. In it he urged the great value of the services which only women could render, and advocated the establishment of Deaconesses after the pattern of those which had existed in Apostolic days. This essay he enlarged and reprinted as a separate book in 1862. The weight of his learning and personal influence did much to break down prejudice, and win the support of the Church's leaders. The whole question of women's work was beginning to be regarded much more seriously than hitherto. It came before Convocation for the first time in 1858, and it was the subject of an earnest debate in the Lower House of Canterbury in 1862, when Canon Seymour advocated the Deaconess cause, and a resolution was passed commending Communities of women, and asking the Bishops to appoint a joint committee to consider the question. The Upper House responded by expressing its thankfulness for the work which was being done; but it felt the time had not yet come for laying down fixed rules.

Thirteen years passed before the subject was again brought forward, though it was frequently discussed in Church Congresses and Diocesan Conferences.

Meanwhile the practical revival of the Order was begun in 1862,[1] when Archbishop Tait, then Bishop of London, set apart Elizabeth Katherine Ferard as the first Deaconess of the English Church. Elizabeth Ferard came of an old Huguenot family. She had always desired to give her life to some definite Church work, though for many years home duties prevented her from doing so. On the death of her parents she paid a visit to the Institution at Kaiserswerth, and afterwards worked for a time with the Sisters at Ditchingham. She was deeply impressed with the need there was for the ministry of Deaconesses in the Church of England, and was led to offer herself for the work. She was supported by two warm friends of the movement, Dean Champneys and Mr Pelham Dale, with whose help she founded the first Deaconess Institution in North London, under the supervision of Bishop Tait. Elizabeth Ferard always felt that she was not suited for the post of Head Deaconess, but as no one else could be found she was persuaded to accept it. The work grew slowly, having to contend against prejudices and misconceptions

[1] Printed 1861 by error in the first edition.

on all sides. Those who favoured Sisterhoods, looked askance at this new community, which seemed to them to encourage a lower and less devoted form of religious life, while others opposed it from an unreasoning dread of its supposed Romanising tendencies. Some of its best friends hindered its progress by accepting a low ideal of the office, leading people to look upon it as one which might be undertaken for a time and laid aside again, involving no life-long consecration or special qualifications. And those who had the cause most deeply at heart were not without their times of perplexity. All was new and untried: they had to feel their way and buy their experience. The right women were hard to find, and the waiting time taxed sorely the patience of the workers. Many would have given up in despair, but Deaconess Ferard was a woman of splendid courage and persistence. She lacked some of those gifts which are thought necessary in the leader of a new movement; she did not possess that personal power of attraction which has distinguished the founders of some of our Sisterhoods. But she had an intense belief in the cause she represented, and a faith in its future, which enabled her to lead what must often in those early days have seemed a forlorn hope. She had also considerable powers of

organisation, and the work increased steadily under her hands. She started an elementary school for the poor children of the neighbourhood, in which her probationers taught; and, that they might gain experience in sick nursing, she had a small home for the dying under the same roof. They were also trained in all kinds of parochial work in the surrounding parishes. Before long the original house in Burton Crescent proved too small, and another was taken further west. For twelve years Deaconess Ferard continued to direct the work, and then, her health failing, she resigned and went abroad for a time. She never again held the post of Head Deaconess, though she continued to work in different places until her death in 1883. One who knew her well describes her as a strict disciplinarian, with an indomitable will and a strong love of justice. She was generous and affectionate, but intensely reserved, with a shy manner that gave an appearance of haughtiness. She had not that gift of ready sympathy which might have enabled her to win many helpers for the cause, but those who knew her well loved and respected her deeply. The task entrusted to her was no easy one, and the courage and perseverance she showed in her efforts to work out the Deaconess principle, have earned for her the grateful remembrance of all

those who have followed her, and entered into her labours.

Perhaps the chief thing Deaconess Ferard accomplished was the awakening of a greater interest in the subject among the rulers of the Church. The first Bishop to take up the cause of Deaconesses was Dr Harold Browne, then Bishop of Ely. He threw himself heartily into the movement, and helped it on by every means in his power. The second Deaconess Institution was founded by him at Bedford, in 1869. Not long after it was started, a severe outbreak of small-pox occurred in the town, and the help which the Deaconesses were able to render at that critical time won for them many warm friends. A beginning was also made in the diocese of Chester in 1860, in Canterbury in 1874, and in Salisbury in 1875. When Bishop Harold Browne was translated to Winchester, he established another Deaconess Home at Farnham (1879), where it was for some years under his direct supervision; but later on it was removed to Portsmouth, as a better centre for work.

Meanwhile, a great step had been gained in 1871, when, just ten years after the appointment of the first Deaconess, a number of the Bishops drew up a paper containing 'Principles and Rules' for the guidance of the Deaconess move-

ment.[1] The paper was signed by the two Archbishops and eighteen of the Bishops, including Bishops Wilberforce, Harold Browne, Temple, Selwyn, Magee, Thirlwall, and Wordsworth. From this time the movement gained ground more rapidly, and began to be better known and understood. The subject was brought forward again in the Southern Convocation of 1875, when the Lower House appointed a Committee 'to consider the rise, progress, and present condition of Sisterhoods and Deaconess Institutions.' In 1878 it presented a report, in which it noted with special approval the work of Deaconesses, 'whose number and influence are steadily though slowly increasing.' A joint Committee of the two Houses was then formed, but effected nothing; and five years passed before the subject was again introduced. In 1883 it was taken up for the first time by the Upper House, the discussion being led by Dr Harold Browne. A new Committee was appointed, with the Bishop of Winchester at its head, and in two years' time it issued a report recommending the Order of Deaconesses as a return to primitive practice, it being 'generally agreed by scholars and divines, that Deaconesses formed an order of ministry in the early Church.' In the course of discussion, exception was taken to placing the

[1] For the text of these 'Principles and Rules' see Appendix D.

Deaconess 'in a position analogous to that of the Deacon,' as a recognised order in the Church. Bishop Harold Browne urged that the position was 'entirely historical,' and that his contention was supported by the authority of Bishop Lightfoot. The Committee were then asked to continue their work, and draw up some resolutions for the consideration of the Bishops. These were not formulated until 1890, when they were discussed and amended, and in 1891 were passed by the Upper House.[1]

In the York Convocation the subject was brought forward for the first time in 1884, when it was warmly advocated by Dean Howson, and a Committee of enquiry was formed. The report it presented was especially valuable for the answers it contained to a number of questions relating to the early history of the Order, which the Committee had submitted to several of the principal theological scholars of the day. These questions and answers were afterwards published by Dean Howson, with other papers by himself on the subject.[2] It was almost his last work, for he died at the close of the year. In him the Deaconess cause lost its earliest and most earnest supporter, who for more than twenty-five years had urged upon

[1] For the text of these resolutions see Appendix D.

[2] *The Diaconate of Women in the Anglican Church.*

the Church its need of such a 'helping ministry' of women.[1] From the first he had a clear conception of what was wanted, viz., 'an authorised official diaconate of women as an integral part of our Church system, a body of Deaconesses co-extensive with the Church itself, ready for service wherever they are needed,—and the needs are very various,—but appointed and directed by the Bishops, and serving under the parochial Clergy.' He lived to see the partial realisation of his ideal. Every few years the system has taken root in a fresh soil. In 1880 the Institution in East London was started by Bishop Walsham How, another warm friend of the movement, and 1887 saw the opening, by Dr Thorold, then Bishop of Rochester, of the Home in South London. Its progress was watched and aided by him with the deepest interest. When appealing to the diocese to support it, he said, 'The heart grows big, almost foolishly big, with thoughts of whereunto this may grow, if the blessing of our God be with it.' The next diocese to establish a Deaconess Institution was Exeter, in 1890, and its example was followed three years later by Llandaff, whose Bishop has revived the Order in Wales. The diocese of Lichfield was one of the first to make use of the ministry of Deaconesses, and it still possesses a Deaconess

[1] See Note on p. 117.

Institution, though its history has not been continuous.[1]

The year 1897 is one to be remembered in the history of the Deaconess cause, for it then received the formal recognition and approval of the whole body of Anglican Bishops assembled at Lambeth. The eleventh resolution of the Conference declares: 'That this Conference recognises with thankfulness the revival alike of Brotherhoods and Sisterhoods and of the Office of Deaconess, in our branch of the Church, and commends to the attention of the Church the Report of the Committee appointed to consider the Relation of Religious Communities to the Episcopate.'[2]

[1] This is now temporarily closed. For a list of English Deaconess Institutions see Appendix E.

[2] For the Report of the Committee see Appendix D.

Note.—Deaconesses have put on record the debt they owe to Dean Howson by placing a tablet on the walls of Southwark Cathedral 'in grateful memory.'

CHAPTER VIII[1]

THE REVIVAL OF THE ORDER OF DEACONESSES—(*continued*)

WE have sketched briefly the progress which the Deaconess movement has made in England since the revival of the Order in 1862.[2] We must now glance further afield, and see what has been done by our sister Churches in America and the Colonies.

It may be a surprise to some to learn that the Americans were before us in the effort to restore to the Church this official ministry of women, as they have also the honour of having founded the first Anglican Sisterhood.[3] At the time when English Churchmen were first turning their attention to the primitive history of Deaconesses, the office was being revived in the United States. It was started first in the Diocese of Maryland in 1855, and began its work at Baltimore. These

[1] This chapter has been in part re-written, 1914.

[2] Printed 1861 by error in the first edition.

[3] The 'Sisterhood of the Holy Communion' was founded in New York in 1845, two years before Miss Sellon's work at Devonport began.

early Deaconesses were occupied chiefly in nursing and teaching. They were admitted to their office by the Bishop, and were under his direct supervision. They were bound together in an Association known as the 'United Deaconesses,' and lived in community, presided over by the 'First Deaconess.'

From Maryland the movement spread to Alabama, where a Deaconess Institution was established by Bishop Wilmer in 1864. The chief work of its members was the care of an Orphanage and of Schools for girls. The Deaconesses lived in community 'not simply for convenience, but from a deep conscientious conviction that they can in this way more effectually work for the glory of God, and the good of mankind.' They worked under the personal supervision of the Bishop.

In 1872 another beginning was made by Bishop Littlejohn, in Brooklyn, New York. In the preceding year the subject had been discussed in the General Convention of the Church, and had met with much sympathy and encouragement. The paper of 'Principles and suggested Rules' which had just been issued by some of the English Bishops, was read at the Convention, and formed the basis of the Deaconesses' Association in Long Island. This Institution differed from its two

predecessors in being chiefly parochial, and in having no community life. It resembled them in being under the immediate control of the Bishop, by whom the Deaconesses were set apart to their office, though without the laying on of hands.[1]

These were, however, isolated efforts, by which experience was gained and the way prepared for more united action.[2] Nothing of importance could be accomplished until the sanction of the Church as a whole had been won, and this was not obtained easily. From the year 1868 onwards the subject was again and again brought before the General Convention. Dr Mühlenberg and Mr William Welsh were perhaps the first advocates of the cause, whose chief leader has since been Dr Huntingdon of New York. The Board of Missions, in 1871, had strongly recommended the opening of Institutions 'for the training of Deaconesses for service in the Church's missionary or educational work,' but eighteen years elapsed before any definite step was taken. In 1889 a canon was passed by the General

[1] For fuller details respecting these Institutions see Bishop Potter's Book on *Sisterhoods and Deaconesses*. New York, 1873.

[2] Of these original Institutions the one in Maryland has ceased to exist, while that in Long Island has become a Sisterhood. [In Alabama there is no longer a Deaconess Institution, but Deaconesses are at work in the diocese, 1914.]

Convention, authorising the appointment of Deaconesses, and laying down the principles on which the Order was to be governed.[1] On all important points these were in complete harmony with those already accepted by the Church in England.

The adoption of this canon marks a new beginning in the history of the Deaconess cause in America. In the two following years Training Schools were opened in the Dioceses of New York and Pennsylvania, and from that time on the work has grown rapidly. Other Institutions have recently[2] been started in New Orleans and in Minnesota, and the Order bids fair to become an important branch of the ministry of the Church in the United States. The lines upon which the movement has developed there differ in some interesting ways from those which have been followed by the Mother Church at home, and an exchange of ideas cannot but be helpful to both sides. A glance at the two principal 'Training Schools' as they are called in America will show the points of contrast.

The New York Training School[3] for Deaconesses

[1] This Canon was amended in 1904. See Appendix D.

[2] *i.e.* in 1898. These Institutions have now ceased to exist. In 1907 another Training School for Deaconesses was opened in Berkeley, California.

[3] This account of the New York Training School has been re written by Dean Susan Knapp, 1914.

was opened in October 1890, with the approval of the Right Reverend Doctor Potter, then Bishop of New York, and under the patronage of the Reverend Doctor Huntington, Rector of Grace Parish, New York City, who was both its founder and also it first Warden.

At the close of a short experimental period, the School was incorporated. The Bishop of the diocese now directs it through the services of a Board of Trustees and a Faculty of Instructors which numbers at the present time eleven clergymen, two laymen and four women. One of the clerical members of the Board of Trustees is appointed Warden of the School, and a member of the faculty is appointed to the office of Dean.

'From the outset the main strength of the institution has been thrown into the intellectual training of the candidates.' The classes are open to other students than those preparing for the office of Deaconess, provided these women have determined to devote their lives to the work of the Church in the home or foreign field.

The School year is divided into three terms. The first, from October until the Christmas vacation, is a probation period. This term and the second, which lasts until May, are devoted to theological and social studies. The third, or summer term, provides a short hospital course,

experience in an institution or rural missionary work.

Students following the regular course of the School are required to take seven instructions a week in the Theological Department, three instructions in Social Service, and to devote at least five hours each week to the practice of social service under direction. They also serve on the Altar Guild of the Cathedral.

Through the generosity of one of the patrons of the School a new school building has recently been erected in the Close of the Cathedral of S. John the Divine, Amsterdam Avenue, New York City. The removal of S. Faith's House to this favoured position has emphasised its diocesan character and enlarged its sphere of usefulness.

The life of the House forms an important part of the training and has been planned with a view to developing in the students the self-discipline and spiritual strength necessary in a Deaconess. The rules that govern the household are few and simple. Loyal obedience to them is a requirement of the School.

Community life, as practised in Sisterhoods, is not a part of the system of training in the American Church.

The Cathedral provides an early celebration of the Holy Communion daily, and a noon service

of intercessions for Missions; and there is in the house an Oratory in which Morning and Evening Prayer are said. An annual Retreat for Deaconesses is also held in S. Faith's House, and from time to time there are Quiet Days for the students and others.

Up to the present time the School has graduated one hundred and twenty-five women. Ninety-three Deaconesses have been sent out, and also twenty-nine graduates who have not become Deaconesses.

Students have come to the School from thirty-four dioceses of the United States, from two dioceses in England, three in Canada, and from Nova Scotia, Honolulu and Japan.

The graduates are working throughout the United States and in the missionary jurisdictions of China, Japan, the Hawaiian and the Philippine Islands.

The Church Training and Deaconess House of the Diocese of Pennsylvania[1] was formally opened upon the Festival of the Epiphany, 1891. Its charter states that, 'Its purpose is the training of women in religious and benevolent work, and especially in the character and duties appertaining to a Deaconess in the Protestant Episcopal Church.

[1] This account of the Philadelphia Training School has been rewritten by Deaconess Carter, 1914.

The Bishop of the diocese is the President of the Corporation. There are nineteen Directors, seven of whom are men, who constitute a Board of Council, and twelve are women, constituting a Board of Managers.

The Warden, who is appointed by the Bishop, is the Chaplain of the House.

The order and discipline of the House is under the direction of the Head Deaconess, subject to the Bishop.

Since the opening of this Institution, the capacity for the accommodation of students has been doubled. Seventy Deaconesses and eighty-seven trained Church workers have graduated, and are serving in the Domestic and Foreign Mission fields as well as in home parishes and institutions.

The School year begins the first Wednesday in October, and ends the last Tuesday in May. In addition to this, twenty weeks of hospital service, or other practical work, is required of all students who wish to graduate in full course, which is considered as a guarantee that they have had the 'adequate preparation' required by the Canon on Deaconesses. Upon the satisfactory completion of the full course, the diploma of the School is given.

The Faculty comprises eight clergymen, a physician, and twenty instructors and teachers. Lectures are given weekly upon Theology and

kindred subjects. Students receive thorough training in Sunday school-work and Social Service, and in other departments of practical work. There are also opportunities for studying missionary questions.

When students from these schools have graduated, and reached the prescribed age of twenty-five,[1] they may apply to a Bishop for ordination, and must present a 'testimonial of fitness,' signed by 'two Presbyters, and twelve lay communicants of the Church, six of whom shall be women.' The canon also requires that a Deaconess should obtain 'the express authority, in writing, of the Bishop' in whose Diocese she works.

It will be seen that the two chief characteristics of the American Deaconess Institutions are: (1) the great importance attached to the intellectual side of the training, and (2) the absence of any community life. Both these features are most marked in the New York Training School. That of Philadelphia has striven to combine the practical and the intellectual, and to emphasise to some extent the value of corporate life during the time of probation for the office of Deaconess. In so doing it resembles some of the English Deaconess Institutions, more especially that of the Diocese of Rochester.

The light in which Deaconesses are regarded by the Church in America is thus described by

[1] Now twenty-three. See Appendix D.

one of her clergy[1]:—'The Diaconate of woman is the taking up of woman's work out of the sphere of mere individual and sporadic effort into a Church order. It is giving it the emphatic impress of Church recognition and approval. It is making it a regular and constant element of its life and being. It may be said that all this had been previously done by Sisterhoods; but only partially, if at all. Sisterhoods have been *permitted* in the Church, Deaconesses are *established* by the Church. Sisterhoods are an order *in* the Church, Deaconesses are an order *of* the Church. . . . This woman's diaconate, like that of men, is a regular ministry, owing allegiance to the Bishop and parish Rector, not to a self-constituted head. It is an arm of the regular ministry extended to reach wants no other arm can reach as well, and that it may be thus effectual, its rule is the rule of the Church, not of a school, or a group, or a coterie within it. It becomes orderly with the orderliness of a family, not of a club. . . . In this order there is the constant recognition of the Deaconess by the Church and the Church by the Deaconess. In it we have the Church's benediction of woman as the minister of Christ —a recognition and approval of all the noble

[1] Sermon by the Rev. C. C. Tiffany, D.D., Archdeacon of New York, Oct. 2, 1896.

work by which Christian women have enriched the world; for its work is not a cloistered seclusion, a separateness from ordinary Christian life, it is identification with it in the work which every Christian in his or her measure is set to do. . . . So this order of Deaconesses is to teach the sacredness of woman's work for Christ, by giving it a place in the regular ministry of His Church.'

We must turn now to our Colonies and Dependencies, and note the beginnings which they have made with regard to Deaconess work.

Australia ranks first, not only as the largest, but because it has been the foremost in establishing the Order of Deaconesses. The Diocesan Synod of Sydney, under the presidency of Bishop Barry, in 1885, passed a resolution commending Deaconess work, and adopting the principles laid down by the English Bishops in 1871. Some years elapsed however, before this resolution took practical shape, but in 1891, a Deaconess Institution was started in Sydney, under the direction of the Rev. M. Archdall. It drew, in the first instance, its inspiration and many of its rules from the Deaconesses of the Protestant Churches in Germany. But though it has adopted some of their methods of work, it is founded upon the principles of the

Anglican Church, and is under the direct authority of the Archbishop of Sydney. The work it has undertaken is very varied. Connected with the Institution are a Home for Children and a Home of Peace for the Dying. The present staff of Deaconesses attached to the Home in Sydney are engaged in Parochial work and in the management of these Institutions. The time of probation for the office varies from one to five years, during which training is received in parish work and in theology. Students are also prepared for the Mission Field. The form of ordination service is modelled upon that for the Ordering of Deacons.

Victoria[1] also has its Deaconess Institution at Melbourne, founded by Bishop Goe, and fostered by its Warden, Canon Handfield. In describing its work he says: 'Our mission has grown insensibly to be a Sisterhood, but it was intended to be parochial, and to do rescue work in the slums of Melbourne.' Attached to the Institution is a House of Mercy, and a Home for Children. The Deaconesses work among the female prisoners of the two gaols in the neighbourhood, and they visit

[1] *i.e.* in 1898. It has not been possible to obtain information up to date, and it is believed that the Institution is now closed.

in some of the poorest parts of the city. The Institution is presided over by the Bishop with the help of a Council both of men and women, including the four Chaplains. The term of probation is two years, during which candidates are required to pass two examinations in theology. The staff is at present small, consisting of the Head Sister, and four Deaconesses. The form of ordination service is the same as that in use in London.

From Australia we pass to *New Zealand*. Here the Order of Deaconesses was revived in 1894, by Bishop Julius of Christ Church. The first Head Deaconess was sent out from the Home in West London. This Institution has already attained considerable success, and now numbers on its staff ten Deaconesses.

Tasmania has taken its first step towards the establishment of the Diaconate of Women. Its Diocesan Synod, presided over by Bishop Montgomery, has passed a resolution in favour of the Order, with regulations as to its position and work. These are in accord with the rules laid down by the Bishops in England, the chief point of difference being that the limit of age for admission to the office is here raised to thirty years. The direct relation of the Deaconess to the Bishop is strongly emphasized. One Deaconess is at present working

in the Diocese, but Tasmania has as yet no training Institution.

Canada cannot yet be said to have established the Order of Deaconesses, though efforts have been made to do so. In 1883 the subject was brought forward in the Synod of Montreal, and a canon was drawn up. This was again discussed and amended by both Houses in 1886, but further action was postponed, and it still awaits the sanction of the Church's Council. The House of Bishops also drew up a form for the ordination of Deaconesses, but this too has never been authorised. Montreal is therefore still without Deaconesses. The Diocese of Toronto, however, under Bishop Sweatman, has led the way by establishing a 'Deaconess and Missionary Training House,' which receives candidates from any part of Canada to be prepared both for home and foreign work. A thorough course of theological instruction is undertaken, lectures being given by the Professors of Wycliffe College. The training includes also parochial work and hospital nursing. A distinction is made between Deaconess Nurses and Deaconess Teachers, and the training differs slightly in the two cases. The Bishop requires that each candidate for the office of Deaconess should obtain a title from the rector of a parish before ordination.

Western Canada. Deaconesses have been work-

ing for the last six years at Calgary, where the Bishop has provided a house which it is hoped may become a centre of training for the supply of women workers, Deaconesses and others, for the West.

South Africa numbers among its workers a few Deaconesses, but no Deaconess Institution has yet been established.

India. The first Deaconess Institution in India was started in the Diocese of Lahore. It was founded by Bishop Matthew in 1896, its Head Deaconess having been previously trained in England, in the Rochester Home, in South London. There are now six Deaconesses working in the diocese. The work of the Deaconesses and the licensed Church workers of the Society of S. Hilda lies among the domiciled community, which had hitherto been much neglected. Surely in the mission field there is a splendid opening for this form of woman's work. In India especially, the conditions of social life are not unlike those which existed in the East fifteen hundred years ago, when the work of Deaconesses was felt to be of such great value in the Church. Now, as then, the work among the women must be done by women.

In the Diocese of Lucknow a Deaconess Home has been opened at Allahabad, and a Head Deaconess has been appointed by the Bishop. Three other Deaconesses are working in the

diocese, two of whom are Indian, and the diocese is remarkable for having been the first to admit an Indian woman to the Diaconate.

The Diocese of Madras is also recognising the need for the work of Deaconesses, especially among the domiciled community. The Bishop has already appointed as Head Deaconess one trained in the Winchester Diocese, who is to be the Head of a Deaconess House in Madras and organise the work.

West Indies. A Deaconess Institution was established at Kingston in Jamaica in 1889 by Bishop Nuttall,[1] as the result of Resolutions passed by the Provincial Synod and a Canon passed by the Diocesan Synod, 'setting forth the principles to be observed and the objects to be kept in view in reviving the office of Deaconess.' In addition to parochial work the Deaconesses are engaged in nursing and teaching, one of the most important departments of the Deaconesses' work being the provision of schools for the better-class children of the island.

North China. A Deaconess Home was established by Bishop Scott in Peking in 1897. Four Deaconesses have been ordained in the diocese, the first of whom was Deaconess Jessie Ransome, who passed to her rest in 1905.[2]

[1] Now Archbishop of the West Indies, 1914.

[2] It is interesting to note that the last ordination service (1913) was in the Chinese language.

CHAPTER IX

THE DEACONESS OF TO-DAY

THIRTY-SEVEN[1] years have passed since the Order of Deaconesses was revived in the English Church, and the movement can still be said to be only in its infancy. Its progress has been slow and tentative, and compared with other contemporary movements the results attained seem discouragingly small. The Deaconesses of the Protestant Churches on the Continent, founded in 1833, now number several thousands, whilst of ordained Deaconesses in England we cannot muster two hundred.[2] The Anglican Sisterhoods in less than half a century have spread all over the country, and become a very real force in the Church. Why then, it may be well to ask, has the Deaconess cause in England made such comparatively slow progress? We believe that the reasons are not difficult to find.

First, the female Diaconate being a definite part of the ministry of the Church, its existence depends upon its recognition and encouragement

[1] Written in 1898.

[2] About 350 women have been ordained in England since the Revival of the Order. 1914.

by the Church's rulers. With the above-mentioned classes of workers this is not so. The Communities of both the German Deaconesses and the Anglican Sisters were founded by private individuals, and their success is due to their own inherent energy and usefulness. Their life does not depend upon their official recognition by the Church. But the Deaconess cannot exist without episcopal sanction. She receives her commission and authority from the Bishop, and the growth and progress of the Order must therefore be in proportion to the support and recognition which it receives from the Bishops. And on the other hand, in order to gain their confidence, she must show herself worthy of the high office entrusted to her. It is neither to be wondered at nor deprecated if the rulers of the Church hesitate in taking the responsible step of admitting women to this sacred ministry, without being well assured of their fitness for it. And this discloses a second reason for the comparatively slow progress which the movement has made. The standard is of necessity high. The Protestant Deaconesses on the Continent are not officially recognised by the Churches to which they belong, nor is their service necessarily life-long, whilst their work which consists largely of nursing, does not require a high degree of education or culture. Under these

circumstances recruits are easily found, being drawn chiefly from the middle classes and the peasantry. With the Anglican Sisters it is different, but here too, the standard is not so exacting. For the Sisterhoods, undertaking as they do various kinds of work, can find a use for women of very limited capacities. They assign to each her place, and the deficiencies of one are supplied by others. Thus one may have a talent for teaching, another may be specially good at visitation, a third may have musical tastes, and yet another may excel in Church embroidery: in the Community scope is found for all, each offering her share to the corporate life of the whole. But the Deaconess who is really to fulfil her ministry requires to possess in some measure many gifts for the varied work of her office. She must be a woman of character and culture, able to teach, well trained in pastoral visitation, tactful and helpful, with every capacity developed to the utmost to meet the large demands which will be made upon her. And there are many things, such as musical and literary gifts, which though not essential, will add immensely to her influence and success.

To these two reasons may be added a third,—the prejudice and misunderstanding which the movement has had to encounter from the begin-

ning. Some objected to a system which would place women in too definite an ecclesiastical position; while in the minds of others the name of Deaconess was associated with workers who had not received the Church's commission, nor dedicated themselves to a life-long service. Nor were these the only difficulties with which the Deaconess has had to contend. She has been confused with the Nurse on the one hand, and with the Sister on the other. When the female diaconate was first revived, great stress was laid by some of its supporters upon nursing as part of the work of a Deaconess; but this was at a time when skilled nurses were very scarce, especially among the poor. Now our splendid system of district nurses has in great measure supplied this need, and left the Deaconess free to devote herself more entirely to the spiritual work which is her special vocation. Of course in the daily round of practical duty she is frequently called upon to minister to the bodily needs of her people. She is constantly visiting the sick; and it is, therefore, most necessary that she should have some knowledge of nursing. It will greatly add to her influence, and will open many doors which would otherwise be closed to her. But she is not a nurse, and if she allows this side of her work to engross too much of

her time, it will be at the cost of her spiritual ministry.

The difference between the Deaconess and the Sister is also one which has perplexed many people, and the two have been sometimes placed in a position of rivalry to each other, which is much to be regretted. There is a clear distinction between them, but there is no necessary opposition. The Church has need of both. There are 'diversities of ministrations' required to-day, as there were in the early days of Christianity, when the Church divided her women-workers into Deaconesses, Widows and Virgins. The principles and aims of the two are different, and the one supplements the other. The vocation of the Sister is to a life of separation and devotion. Her aim is to emphasize the great truth that life is more than labour, that to pray is to work. And perhaps in no age has this truth been so much needed as in our own. 'The Sister's vocation then is not to this or that work, possibly not at all to what is called work, but solely to be His.'[1] Beautiful as this ideal is, however, it only represents half the truth. For 'in this loud stunning tide of human care and crime' the Church has need of others who can carry her message and witness for her Lord amid the 'dusty lane and

[1] Dean Butler, Church Congress, 1893.

crowded mart' of the world's life. And such is the mission of the Deaconess. Her aim is to be 'the servant of the Church:' her motto is, 'Ich dien.' It is for active ministry that she receives her commission from the Church. Not that either of these vocations can be wholly separated from the other. As the intercessions of the Sister must seek their fulfilment in works of mercy, so the service of the Deaconess would be useless indeed unless it were the outcome of a life of secret devotion and self-dedication. But the calling of the one is to watch, of the other to work. What a strength might it not be to the Deaconess to feel that while she is struggling amid the sin and sorrow which she encounters in her daily ministry, the Sister on the hill-top is lifting up holy hands in constant intercession.

A difference in the organisation of the two requires to be noticed. The Sister belongs to and exists for the Community, from which she receives her commission, and to which she owes implicit obedience. The Deaconess is part of the ordered ministry of the Church, owing allegiance to the Bishop and the Clergy under whom she works. Whether she live singly or in community it is as the handmaid of the Church, whose life's aim is to be 'a succourer of many.'

Though in the past thirty-seven[1] years the

[1] Written in 1898.

growth of the Deaconess movement has not been as rapid as its founders hoped, yet enough has been done to prove the possibilities which lie before it in the future, and to indicate the lines of its development. The past years have not been idle ones; much experience has been gained, and quiet lasting work has been done.

Up to the present the movement in England has developed upon two distinct lines. Some Institutions have given great prominence to the corporate life of their members, while others have regarded the Community as simply a means to an end. The former resemble sisterhoods in making the Deaconess Home the centre of authority, to which each member owes obedience, and from which she receives support. The latter might be compared rather to theological colleges, whose chief object is the training of the workers; the community life which binds them together both before and after they have left the Home being of secondary, though very real, importance. The comparison between the two may be illustrated by that between the parochial Clergy and a Brotherhood such as the Cowley Fathers. Both alike belong to the ministry of the Church, but in the one case the individual works at the bidding of his Order, in the other as an independent servant of the Church. Both have their special

value; and they are suited to the nature and capacity of different individuals. So with Deaconesses, experience seems to show that both methods are and will be needed to meet the requirements of those who enter the Diaconate. Many natures especially among women, are grateful for the control and guidance exercised by the Head of a Community, and shrinking from isolation and responsibility find comfort in the moral support of a life lived in common with other workers. The unity of this common life gives strength, its united worship is most helpful, and it saves from many of the temptations to over-work and depression which beset the solitary parish Deaconess. There are many who would be unequal to the strain of organising their life and work for themselves, responsible only to their parish Priest, who are yet capable of doing invaluable work when associated with and directed by others.

On the other hand, there are many women who are well fitted after thorough training to fill this more responsible position. That immediate control which is a comfort and support to the one, checks and impedes the development of the other. Greater freedom brings out the variety of character which the Church needs for her varying ministrations. The isolation which weakens the one braces the other. Nor must it be thought that

this independence implies an impatience of proper control. The Deaconess has been taught during her training a respect for authority which will show itself in a loyal and ready obedience to the wishes of the Clergy under whom she works, and in a faithful adherence to the principles of the Institution to which she belongs.

The varying advantages of these different methods depend not only on the individuals, but also on the character of the work undertaken. Such work as the care of friendless girls, the charge of Orphanages and Rescue Homes, will be most successfully done by workers living in Community. But for the parochial work, which is pre-eminently that for which the Deaconess is needed, and for which continuity is required, the other system would seem to be better adapted, especially in a Diocese of scattered towns, where centralisation is difficult. The more such workers can be left at liberty to place themselves entirely at the disposal of those for whom they are working, independent of all control save that of their Bishop and the Clergy whom they serve, the more valuable will be their ministry. But it may be said that this freedom has its dangers, that there are many temptations to which the isolated Deaconess is exposed, and from which the community Deaconess is sheltered by the supervision

and control of a central authority. The cause, it is urged, will be damaged by the indiscretions and vagaries of individual members, which would be avoided by the stricter system. Doubtless this will prove true in some cases, but it must be remembered that Deaconesses are not amateur workers, but trained and disciplined women, whose characters have been developed and braced during a long course of definite preparation for their office. If their training has attained its object, it has imbued them with a spirit of loyalty to the cause, and endowed them with habits of orderly self-denying conduct, which will safeguard them when the actual restraints of the fixed rule of life are removed. In this matter a generous confidence will succeed where an anxious cautiousness will fail. In every department of work in the present day women are learning greater self-reliance and trustworthiness, and these are qualities which can only be developed by actual exercise.

Both systems have their peculiar dangers, against which we need to be earnestly on our guard. On the one hand there is a serious peril lest the interests of the Community should be allowed to overshadow the special vocation of the Deaconess, and lest the allegiance she renders to the authorities in the Home, should interfere with

the obedience she owes to the Bishop and Clergy whom she serves. For this is to confuse the Deaconess with the Sister, and to revert to Mediæval rather than to Primitive practice.

The danger to which the opposite system is liable springs from a different source. It is a tendency to undervalue the principle of the corporate life, and so to neglect the cultivation of that fellowship in ministry which should bind so closely those who are linked together in a common service. This tendency can only be checked by the growth of an *esprit de corps* which shall enable Deaconesses to realise that they are not mere units, working alone, but that they are 'members one of another,' as well as of the great family of God.

The time has probably not yet come for regulating precisely the lines which the Deaconess movement should follow.[1] If the great principles laid down by the rulers of our Church are faithfully adhered to, then experience may be trusted to work out the best practical methods of applying them. Of these principles the most fundamental are those which were specially emphasised in the recent[2] report of the Lambeth Conference:[3] (1) the immediate relation in which the Deaconess stands to the Bishop; (2) the imperative need of

[1] See note on p. 152 [2] Written in 1898. [3] *Cf.* Appendix D.

an 'adequate term of preparation and probation' for the office.

The first of these points goes to the very root of the life of the Deaconess. If indeed she be a part of the ordered ministry of the Church, then 'under whatever form of organisation' she may work, she 'holds of necessity a direct and personal relation to her Diocesan Bishop.' If anything is allowed to obscure or weaken this relationship, it will inevitably result, as in the middle ages, in the decline and disappearance of the Order.

The second point is of almost equally vital importance. If women are to be worthy of this high position, they 'must first have been carefully trained and tested as to their fitness for the office, and their purpose to devote their lives to its high calling.'[1] The American Church directs that this 'preparation shall have covered the period of two years.' The need of training for religious work is happily now no longer an open question. What should be the exact nature of the training in the case of a Deaconess has not yet been unanimously settled. The rules drawn up in 1871 required that it should be 'both technical and religious.' We may perhaps divide it under three heads:—devotional, intellectual, and practical; or a training in character, in intelligence, and in experience.

[1] *Cf.* Appendix D.

By the practical training we mean the practice of the daily round of duty which will be demanded of the Deaconess. No merely theoretical teaching can supply the power to visit 'the sick and the whole,' to take a Bible Class, conduct a Mothers' Meeting, superintend a Sunday School or Band of Hope, manage a Girls' Club and Night School, teach in the Day School ; or even the less difficult tasks of keeping accounts, reading aloud, cooking, dressing a wound, and fulfilling all the manifold duties which will fall to the share of the Deaconess. To do these things well is an art, and those who would possess it must be content to serve an apprenticeship. The art can only be learnt by patient practice. The teacher may guide, correct faults and explain failures, but each student must gain the experience for herself by slow and patient toil. To neglect this part of the training, and send the Deaconess out unequipped in practical knowledge, is to court defeat for her, and to bring discredit upon her Order.

But this part of a Deaconess' outfit cannot be separated from the second portion, viz., the storing of the intellect. And here our sisters in America have led the way, in giving great—some may think undue—prominence to the intellectual side of the training.[1] Certainly the high degree of intelligence they require from women candi-

[1] Considerable advance has been made in the intellectual training in English Deaconess Institutions since this was written.

dates for the Diaconate helps to raise both the standard of those who receive the office, and the estimation in which it is held by others. If the Deaconess is to be able to teach she must herself be thoroughly grounded in the teaching of the Church, and be so instructed in theology that she may be able to 'give an answer concerning the hope that is in her.' Unhappily, owing to the small amount of definite theological teaching given in our girls' schools,[1] this knowledge has in most cases to be gained during the short period of probation, and in addition to all the practical experience. It is comparatively easy to emphasize one or other point in the training, it is difficult to combine the two in due proportion. It is wellnigh impossible to do justice to both in the present limited time allotted to the training. Our Universities and our Theological Colleges for non-graduate students require a three years' course of study, and although we would not make the mistake of demanding exactly the same education for the Deacon and for the Deaconess, we may at least ask that the standard for the latter shall not be a lower one. This may be partly secured by following the example of the American train-

[1] There is, however, promise of a better state of things. Both the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge now admit women to study theology, and the Cheltenham College for girls has recently added to its staff a lecturer in theology (1898).

ing schools in requiring an entrance examination, as well as final examinations. In this last respect Wales has led the way. In the Diocese of Llandaff the same examination for Holy Orders is required of both Deacons and Deaconesses, the Greek and Latin alone being optional in the case of the latter.

There remains a third element in the training, which though here put last, must ever hold the first place. The training of character is of all importance, and in England it has been strongly felt that for this the discipline and direction of corporate life during probation are essential. The first principles of Deaconess work are: a loyal reverence for authority, a readiness in obeying those who are placed over her, a willingness to undertake the lowliest service, together with a tact and humility which will enable her to co-operate with other workers and to efface herself. How are these qualities to be developed, except through the daily discipline of a life lived under authority, in common with other workers. As well might we expect a soldier who has never been drilled to fall into line and keep touch with his comrades in the day of battle, as expect a Deaconess who has never been trained in habits of orderliness, submission to rule, and consideration of others, to exhibit these qualities in her daily ministry.

If, during their time of probation, the future Deaconesses can be made to realise that they are 'members one of another,' they will learn in a way that nothing else can teach them the meaning of the mystical Body of Christ, and of their own position as servants of that Body, the Church.

And besides all this, the Deaconess needs to have cultivated the habit of devotion which alone can enable her to fulfil her service acceptably. Those will gain the habit most readily who during their probation have breathed the atmosphere of a simple, healthy devotion, with its many opportunities of common prayer and communion with our Lord.

The period of probation is therefore one of inestimable value; for it is a time not only of training, but of testing, during which the workers can be proved, and trial made of the thoroughness of their self-dedication, before they receive their life-long consecration from the hands of the Bishop. Thus alone can the Church guard against unfaithfulness or lack of stedfastness on the part of those upon whom she confers 'the spiritual gift of the Diaconate.'

Such is the training which we need for our Deaconesses. The standard is high, and the attainment to it difficult. Might it not be possible to increase our present efficiency by uniting our

forces? Until the time comes when each Diocese shall have its own centre for training Deaconesses, why should we not follow the example of the American Church, and establish a few principal training colleges, to which Bishops might send candidates, to receive them back again before ordination? One or two such centres, planted where there was ample scope for work, and where suitable teachers could be obtained, whose lectures might be open to outside students, would unquestionably prove most valuable in increasing the efficiency of the female Diaconate. They would form a bond of union between the Deaconesses of different Dioceses, who had thus learnt to know each other during the course of their training; and by doing something to educate other workers, they would prove a source of strength to the Church at large.

There are other points upon which greater unanimity would add largely to the effective working of the Order. Such for example are the questions of the licensing of Deaconesses, and the mode of passing them from one Diocese to another, and more especially the drawing up of an authorised form of ordination service, as well as the adoption of a common, 'simple and distinctive' dress. But these are matters upon which we await the decision of the rulers of

our Church. If, too, they could see their way to make an authoritative statement upon a point on which all English Deaconesses are united—viz., the permanent character of the orders conferred upon them, it would, we are convinced, do much to strengthen the hands of those who hold the office. A clear understanding of the exact nature of the 'diaconal benediction' would place in their true light such questions as that of the marriage of Deaconesses. Marriage also is a holy calling, but the duties of the two are mutually exclusive. It is impossible that the wife and mother should be able to 'attend upon the Lord without distraction.' If then the consecration received by the Deaconess be life-long and indelible, it must be felt that to forsake this vocation for any other is, in some measure, to have 'received the grace of God in vain,' and to incur the responsibility of those who 'having put their hand to the plough look back,' and thus prove themselves unworthy of the sacred trust committed to them.

If this be accomplished for us, the one great need that remains is for women to come forward and offer themselves for this ministry. We want brave, strong, true women, women of culture, of means—above all, of single-hearted devotion, to carry on this work. There must be hundreds,

nay, thousands of such women in our land who might respond to this call. And surely there can be no higher, happier, more honourable and more blessed form of service than this, upon which the Church has set the seal of her special approval, and in doing which we are following in the footsteps of holy women of old, women such as Aeria and Olympias, Phoebe and Priscilla, Mary and Joanna. For the

> 'paths we tread
> Are the same where they were led;
> Very sacred grown and sweet,
> Trodden by immortal feet,—
> Trodden once, oh best of all!
> By the Feet at which they fall.'[1]

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[1] "Songs, Old and New," by Mrs Charles.

Note.—"The next Lambeth Conference would have to consider very carefully the question of dealing fully and adequately with the due development and regulation of the Order." Extract from the speech of the Archbishop of Canterbury at Church House, June 27th, 1912, as reported in the *Guardian*. *Cf.* Appendix E.

CHAPTER X

THE DAILY LIFE OF A PARISH DEACONESS

THE question is frequently asked: 'What exactly is the work of a Deaconess?' This question will perhaps be best answered by a description of the life which is being lived by our Parish Deaconesses to-day.[1]

Let our readers then picture for themselves two little rooms in a not very inviting-looking street in one of our big town parishes. For the Deaconess wants to live in the midst of her people, and suitable lodgings, with a clean comfortable landlady, are not always easy to find. She may be fortunate enough to be in a parish which possesses a Church House, in which she will have her own rooms. But, however unattractive they may look from the outside, you will be sure to find them bright and cosy within; the nice white curtains, polished floor,

[1] This does not, of course, claim to be an exact description of the life of all parochial Deaconesses. The methods of work differ with the varying conditions of different Dioceses. But this account is a faithful picture of the life and work of the Rochester Deaconesses in South London, with which the writer is most familiar.

[To some the picture sketched in this chapter has given the impression that the life of a Deaconess is merely a round of activities. This could not be the case where the Deaconess is a woman of prayer. It certainly was far from being the case with the writer of the chapter herself.] 1914.

tasteful, though simple furniture, with pictures, books and little personal effects, forming a pleasing contrast to some of her surroundings. The sitting-room is brightened by plants and flowers, often the gift of loving fellow-workers. We have known Deaconesses whose rooms were in this way kept constantly supplied with fresh flowers almost the whole year round, the donors explaining, 'Deaconess will not let us give her anything else, but she cannot refuse to accept flowers.' And indeed she is grateful, for she wants her room to be as beautiful as possible, feeling that it, like herself, has a silent witness to offer and a work to do in bringing the refining influences of Christianity to bear upon the lives and homes of those around her. So she will spare no pains in keeping her house as fresh and bright as possible, that it may help to rest and cheer the many tired city workers who will come to see her there, and will go away stimulated to try and make their own homes more like that of 'our Deaconess.' We remember the delight of a Deaconess who had put some pretty muslin curtains in her window, when she saw within a few days an exact copy of them appear in a neighbouring window, which before had displayed a very shabby pair!

The Deaconess is an early riser; for these first morning hours are the only hours she can really

call her own, and they are invaluable to her as the time in which she gets her quiet reading and devotion, and prepares for the day's work. By 8.30 a.m. she has probably already been to Matins, and had her breakfast, and is now sitting at her desk. But early as she is she cannot be sure of being long undisturbed, for her people are early too, and by and bye comes a knock at the door. Interruptions are among the things that a Deaconess has to learn to suffer gladly, and she rises at once to respond to some such request as: 'Please, Deaconess, mother wants a letter for the Children's Hospital, as Johnny is worse again,' or, 'Please, Deaconess, father's got the bronchitis, and mother said would you lend her a steam kettle.' The request granted, the Deaconess drops into her chair again, looking up presently to glance at the clock and close her books with a little sigh. For this may be one of the mornings when she gives the religious instruction at the schools, and she must set an example of punctuality. Or if it is Monday, she is probably due at the vicarage, to meet the Clergy, report special cases, and receive her share of the coming week's work. For the Deaconess is the servant of the Clergy; she does not plan out her own work, but receives it from her Vicar. Her duties will vary, therefore, according to the

wishes of those under whom she serves. Before starting she picks up her bag (a wonderful arrangement which the children think contains everything, even down to babies), and glances to see that it is provided with all she is likely to require during the day. It may be her duty to attend at the vestry or parish room, there to help or represent the Clergy in receiving the applications for various kinds of relief. Perhaps too, she has started an 'Industrial,' and half an hour will be spent in giving out needlework to some of the very poor women—widows, or mothers whose husbands are out of work, to whom the extra shilling thus earned means several little comforts during the week.

By eleven o'clock she is generally free to set out on her morning's round of visits. This will vary with the day. In the early part of the week she will probably be collecting the savings of the people for the provident club, and she will have to pay a great many calls in one morning, passing rapidly from house to house, with a few cheery words in each; but always ready to stop where she is really wanted, to visit a sick child, make a poultice, dress a burn, or listen to some tale of trouble as the case may be. Or perhaps one of the District Visitors has sent to tell her that she is unable to do her work this week, and cannot

find anyone to take her place. So the Deaconess is off to that street, glad of the opportunity of a talk with some whom she does not often see, and making the acquaintance of new comers. It may be that she is running round with the notices of some special service or temperance meeting, notices which are far more likely to be read and attended to, if they are accompanied with a few persuasive words, and the assurance, 'now Mrs Brown, I shall be there, and shall be looking out for you and your husband.' Then there is some beef-tea to be taken to a sick person, and a chop to be bought for the dinner of some delicate mother, just convalescent, and thinking too much of the children to take proper care of herself. And perhaps her bag contains a bunch of flowers, or a picture book for the little sick child whose pale face will brighten at the sight of her 'Deakness.' She will need to exercise much tact, will learn to see quickly when she is not wanted, and will have a due respect for 'washing days,' and the hour when the husband is expected home to dinner and the wife is busy 'dishing up.' But there will always be those whose work has been stopped by sickness, or laid aside in old age, who welcome gladly the visit of the Deaconess, even if she can only spare a few minutes to repeat a hymn, or pass on some cheer-

ing thought which has come from her own early morning reading.

And so the morning flies all too quickly, and by one o'clock she is quite ready for her midday meal and rest. So if she is a well-disciplined Deaconess, she will repress the desire to pay just one more visit, and will return to her rooms for a short hour's rest. But even this is by no means secure, for her people know that this is one of the few times to catch the Deaconess at home, and she may find one of the other workers waiting to tell her of some one who is ill or in trouble, whom she would be glad if the Deaconess could find time to visit, or to ask her advice about some difficult case she has just met with in her district. And the Deaconess responds gladly, for the bond between the other workers and herself is one which she is ever trying to draw closer, realising what a source of strength it may be on both sides.

A few minutes' quiet, and she is ready for her afternoon's work. If it is Monday there will certainly be a Mothers' Meeting to attend. It is probably conducted by the Vicar's wife or some other lady worker, but the Deaconess will be there to help, and perhaps to give an address at the close. Or it may be the day when her band of workers meet to help in the cutting out of the

garments which supply the 'Industrial.' This is always a very happy afternoon, for these helpers are themselves working women, giving up their hardly earned leisure to do this piece of work for the Church. And very quickly and well they do it, chatting all the time about parish matters, and drawing close together over their labour of love. You may find these same women on another afternoon, sitting in the Deaconess' room, busily occupied in mending the cassocks and surplices of the Church, and enjoying a cup of tea over their work. And at sales of clothes, Sunday School treats and parochial teas, their help is quite invaluable, and the Deaconess wonders how any parish can get on without them. For she knows she can always turn to some of them if she wants beef-tea or a pudding made for the sick, a child taken to the hospital, or a kindly office performed for some neighbour in trouble. And they, in their turn, learn to feel it a privilege to have their share in the ministry of the Church they love.

But perhaps there is no afternoon meeting, and the Deaconess is free to spend the time in visiting. She looks through her list of special cases, and is off to read to an old woman or a bed-ridden man. Then there are absentees from the Mothers' Meeting or Temperance Society to be enquired after,

truants from the Sunday School to be looked up, irregular Communicants to be called upon, a visit of comfort to be paid to one in trouble, or some one who has been slipping away from the right path to be warned and helped. She must be prepared too for unexpected calls, such as, 'Please, mother wants to speak to you,' from a little voice at her side, or 'Deaconess, can you spare a minute or two?' from a window opposite. There is hardly anything she will not be asked to do, from making a will to drawing a tooth! She will be sent for before the doctor in sickness, and instead of the policeman to settle a quarrel! She has taught her people that she is their servant, and they will not fail to make full use of her. The sense of appropriation with which they talk about 'our Deaconess' is very delightful.

But again, on another afternoon she dons her best cloak and gloves, and you know that she is off to pay what are termed 'calls.' Each of these visits has some definite object. Either she is in need of a Sunday School teacher to supply a vacancy, or another helper in her Girls' Club, or she wants to consult a District Visitor about some case in her district, or to enlist one of the wealthier members of the congregation[1] in some poor family.

[1] Unhappily, in too many South London Parishes this element is entirely absent.

If she is wise she will not grudge the time thus spent, but will look upon it as an important part of her work. For she forms a sort of connecting link between the rich and the poor, and may do much to bridge over the gulf between what are called 'the Classes' and 'the Masses.' The apparent indifference and want of sympathy for the suffering and sorrow around them, of which the rich are so often accused, is due far more to 'want of thought' than 'want of heart.' It is difficult to realise needs with which one never comes into contact; while the desire to help is often discouraged by the fear of pauperising, and the difficulty of discovering the really deserving cases. There are many who, though they may feel themselves unfitted or unable to take a personal share in the work, will yet gladly do all in their power to strengthen the hands of one whom they feel to be in a certain sense their representative. Very warm friends for herself and her people the Deaconess may make in this way. They will send her letters for Hospitals and Convalescent Homes, flowers and fruit for the sick, old clothes for her sales, toys and books for the children. They will employ her women in their houses, help to find situations for her boys, and get her girls into service. Nor will she let them rest content with a vicarious form of charity, but will strive to bring

them into that personal touch with her people which may be so helpful to both.

With regard to the difficult question of charity, the Deaconess will probably tell you that she wishes it could be taken out of her hands altogether. It takes long to teach some of her poor folk that she is not a Church Relieving Officer, whose chief use is to distribute tickets for coal and groceries. She wants to be welcomed for her Master's sake, and not for what she may have to give; and she is rather pleased than otherwise when a woman shouts after her down the street, 'I shan't turn religious for what *you've* got to give away!' But in most parishes the distribution of the alms will form one of her duties, and in this work she will gladly welcome and co-operate with the Charity Organisation Society. Loth as she is to spend her time at Committees, she will generally contrive to spare an hour or two to attend this one, for the sake of the experience she will gain and the information and advice she can give. She has cause to be very grateful to this society for the substantial help which it has often given in cases whose needs were beyond the limits of the parochial funds;—sick folk sent to Convalescent Homes, families tided over times of special difficulty, bread winners set upon their feet again, girls got into Homes or service, and

old age provided with a pension which removes the constant fear of the workhouse.

By this time the afternoon is over, and the Deaconess has fairly earned her cup of tea, and enjoys it as only a tired worker can. Perhaps, too, she has asked some other worker to join her, an opportunity which is not a little appreciated by those who have once come and enjoyed a cosy chat about their work, with its pleasures and difficulties. This is a capital way of getting to know the Day and Sunday School teachers and other Church helpers; and many a confidence has been reposed in the Deaconess during these quiet talks, to be repaid by her sympathy and advice.

Then follows Evensong, a very restful and refreshing half hour. And now, if she is fortunate, she may have an hour or two of quiet before the inevitable evening engagement. You will find her again at her desk, preparing an address for the Mothers' Meeting or Bible Class, writing up her Parish books and reports, doing her club accounts, writing an article for the Parish Magazine, or more rarely indulging in the luxury of some reading for her own benefit. Very happy she thinks herself if she is allowed to remain undisturbed, but at the best the time goes all too quickly, and before eight o'clock she is off again.

The evening work varies with the day. Now it is the Band of Hope which she has to superintend, and to-morrow it will be the adult Temperance Society, where she must be in time to shake hands with everybody. Or she may be responsible for the Sunday School teachers' class, a very enjoyable piece of work; and another night there is a service in the Mission Room, at which she will be needed to lead the singing. Then there is a Girls' Club or a Night School class, very interesting though somewhat exhausting; or instead of these she may have a women's Bible Class or Communicants' Guild. And at certain times of the year there may be candidates for confirmation requiring her instruction. If there should happen to be no meeting, she is very glad of the opportunity to call upon one or two of the working men, who are never to be found at home except in the evening, and who, when once she has got to know them, often prove her warmest friends. If space permitted, we could recall many delightful instances of the generous and ready help received from these men. We think especially of one Deaconess who was fortunate enough to have a little bit of garden attached to the Church House in which she lived. All the year round this was kept bright and beautiful by a working man, who freely gave up some of his few hours' rest day

after day, to cultivate it, and grow the flowers which went to brighten many a sick room in the Parish.

But now the day is drawing to a close, and ten o'clock finds the Deaconess back in her rooms, weary in the work, but not of it, conscious that she is but an 'unprofitable servant,' and seeking only that her Master's word at the last may be, 'she hath done what she could.'

Now and then she will get that delightful thing in a Deaconess' life—a spare evening. Then, if she be fortunate enough to live within easy reach of the Deaconess Institution by train or tram, she will run over for a few hours, and perhaps stay the night, to get a sight of those in the Home, and a chat with the Head Deaconess. And very comforting these talks are, and well worth all the trouble of the journey. For hard worked and weary as the Head Deaconess may be, she is never too tired to welcome her children, to listen to the account of all their difficulties, to sympathise with their story of success or failure, and to advise and encourage them in times of trial. 'A visit to the Head Deaconess is a sort of moral tonic,' said one, and in the bracing atmosphere of the Home, the sisterly intercourse with those who are still in training, above all, in the simple and peaceful services in the beautiful

chapel, her soul is endued with fresh strength for the work of her ministry.

And now and again the Deaconess sets off to pay a flying visit to a sister Deaconess. Over their cup of tea they compare notes and exchange experiences, and are drawn very close together in the bond of common work and mutual sympathy. Once a month, also, a service at the Home affords the Deaconesses an opportunity of meeting not only each other, but other workers associated with the Institution. And once or twice a year a visit from their Bishop, or a call to 'Retreat' or to a 'Quiet Day,' brings them together, and helps them to realise their union with each other in the 'fellowship of the Gospel.'

One day in the seven is set apart for rest. This will probably be Saturday, for, unlike most workers, Sunday with the Deaconess is one of the busiest days of the week. If she is wise, she will guard this resting time carefully, knowing that it is absolutely essential if she is to keep bright and fresh amid the sad surroundings of her life. Happy the Deaconess who is able to run over to her home for the day, or whose friends are near at hand, and who can thus gain the refreshment which comes from complete change of thought. For the special consecration which the Deaconess has received does not sever family

ties, nor cut her off from her friends. Rather does it give them a new value, and we can safely say that no one appreciates a holiday more thoroughly than the Deaconess, when the summer comes round, and brings with it her well-earned month's rest.

Our readers will see that a life such as this does not leave much room for loneliness. Of course the Deaconess, like all other workers, will have her times of depression. She will meet with disappointments in her work, and the more she loves her people, the more she will feel their troubles, and the more anxious she will be when they go wrong. But on the other hand, their affection, shown in many touching, sometimes amusing ways, will be a source of constant delight to her, the growth in grace and Christian character which she will watch in one and another, will comfort her not a little, the successes will atone for the failures, and she will tell you that the words of her Master are literally true, and that she does indeed receive an hundredfold in return for anything she may have given up for His sake.

CHAPTER XI[1]

THE OPPORTUNITIES OF A DEACONESS

WHILST it is not possible to overestimate the value of the work that may be done by a parish Deaconess, and probably the majority of women will find their full satisfaction in such work, yet the needs of the Church at present call for special work from women which as a rule the Deaconess should be the person best fitted to give. In the complex life of the present day social and philanthropic work of every kind asks for the co-operation of the Church even when it is not directly initiated by the Church. It is important that the contribution made by the Church to such work should be of the very best, just as it is important that the Church should secure the very best women for its own work. There has long been a sort of tacit assumption that the natural leader of the women's work in the parish is the vicar's wife, and in the diocese the Bishop's wife. Yet it is quite possible that neither of these may have either the special

[1] Written by Louise Creighton, 1914.

gifts or the special training needed for such work. They may, moreover, very probably be absorbed in family duties to which it is obvious their first attention is due. It cannot be too strongly insisted upon that neither a Bishop's wife nor a clergyman's wife holds in the strict and technical sense of the word any official position. If she have the gifts which fit her to be a leader in work she has no doubt very special opportunities, but if she is without these gifts it is as bad for the work as it is for herself that she should try to do what she is not fitted to do. Yet leaders are wanted, and were never more wanted amongst women than at the present day when there is so much uncertainty as to what should be the ideals and aims of women. Especially is this the case in work for the Church. It was long considered that piety and devotion were all that was needed for the woman church worker, and though now the need for some sort of training is generally recognised, the opportunities for leadership which lie before women of character and ability in Church work are not even yet fully realised.

Amongst the Deaconesses we look for women who by their capacity, their experience, and their devotion will be fit to be leaders of other women and to work side by side with leaders among men, as the parish Deaconess works side by side with the parochial clergy. Amongst the Deaconesses the

Bishop should be able to find his best advisers as regards the women's work in the diocese as a whole. The early training and discipline of the Deaconess life, the experience of working out in the world side by side with men will help to deliver her from the temptations to arrogance and arbitrariness which so often beset women of capacity when they work amongst their inferiors. To many women power is a new thing and it may easily become a snare. Much Church work is now organised on diocesan lines; it would be of great advantage if there were a Deaconess capable to be placed at the head of such work in the diocese as is specially concerned with women and children. We have learned to see the importance of rescue work, and we are beginning to realise how difficult and complicated are the questions connected with it. To take the lead of the rescue work in the diocese we should have a woman of real culture and of wide experience as well as of deep sympathy, able to look at the question in all its bearings, and above all, through her previous training capable of constant growth and development, of receiving new ideas, and possessing the judgment to enable her to see their value.

Again, with regard to the educational work of the Church, immense possibilities lie before the

Deaconesses. During their training, they have learnt how to teach, and their thorough theological and biblical studies have taught them what to teach. At a time when we are feeling more and more the need for thorough efficiency in our Sunday-schools a Deaconess has important work to do not only in the organisation of the schools themselves but in the training of the teachers. She will have the opportunity to test and to study new methods, and a Bishop who possesses in his diocese an educational expert among his Deaconesses will know how to use her to give new inspiration to the Sunday-school teachers as well as to introduce improved methods into the schools. Whilst we must no doubt always look to the Sunday-schools for perhaps the greater part of the Church teaching of the children of the Church, it seems possible that in the future right of access to the State schools may be given to the teachers of those denominations that desire it. In the provision and organisation of such teaching Deaconesses should take a leading part. But the educational work that they may do is not limited to the children in our elementary and Sunday-schools. The religious unrest of the day which shows itself so often among the younger women in their pursuit of every kind of new religious society and fad, is largely caused by their igno-

rance of the faith into which they have been baptised. They cannot do without religion, and their own religious training has not been sufficient to give them secure foundations on which to build. The intellectual girl, unless she cares enough about her religious ideas to make the effort to seek some reasonable basis for them, drifts away from orthodox religion just as readily as does the young man. The girl who lives for pleasure finds the restraints of conventional religious observances irksome, and grows careless about her church-going. When trouble comes, women are a prey to all kinds of new religious ideas, which, in so far as they are true, are but the old ideas in a new dress, but which promise satisfaction and the excitement of novelty. Their knowledge of the Christian faith is so imperfect that they do not realise that what is true in the new ideas is to be found in the old faith. There is an undefined sense that Christianity is undermined, that the higher criticism has weakened and destroyed the authority of the Bible. This state of things shows the urgent need for better teaching during youth, and for guidance and encouragement to further study after school years. A Deaconess might well be asked to give the religious teaching in High Schools, and she has a wide field of usefulness before her in the organisation of study circles and

Bible-classes for older girls and women. Nor should her teaching activities be confined to girls and women. A Deaconess with a real gift for teaching will be able to take Bible-classes too for men and boys, work in which women are often more successful than men. As she has given her life to the work, and as she is in definite official relations with the Bishop, there will be opportunity for her, should her gifts lie in that direction, to be thoroughly acquainted with the needs of the diocese as regards religious education. She should be able to assist in the inspection of religious teaching, in the drawing up of syllabuses, in the formulation of new schemes. Admirable teaching work has been done and is being done by women for the Church, but in many cases this work is isolated: it depends upon the individual who is doing it. If the results of this individual work, if the experience gained by these scattered teachers could be garnered for the use of the whole Church and their methods studied and noted, it would be of real service to the cause of religious education. Here is work which might be done for the Bishop and the diocese by a Deaconess with the right qualifications just because she is one who has given her life for the service of the Church.

The teaching work which a Deaconess does, as it

brings her into contact with the young gives her an opportunity for recruiting new workers for the Church. To so many who would gladly do something for others, it is the beginning that is so difficult. But a suggestion made by some one who knows their capacities, some one whom they have learned to love and trust will get over the first difficulties and will help them to make the right start. The fact that the Deaconess is not cut off in her life from the world is here an immense advantage and should be made the most of. She is an educated and refined woman, she should keep up her interest in the questions of the day, in literature and art, for the good of her work, that her own mind may be kept from narrowness, that she may have points of contact with all kinds of people. The consecrated life lived in the world is not easy, but it is to that life that she is called, and it is through that life that her special opportunity comes. She has to show that the things of God are lovely, and that all beautiful things may be hallowed by being looked upon as His and to be used in His service. She must be a leader in the work of the Church, attracting others to work for the Church, just because she mixes with people of every kind and aims at winning all for Christ's work.

At a time when social schemes of all sorts for

the improvement of the conditions of life are being considered, the Church cannot afford to stand outside. Its business is to see that the Christian standard is brought to bear upon every department of life, upon all social relations. Here women of education, especially those who have made a real study of economics may be of great value. The philanthropic work of the Church, though it will have its own particular character and will be inspired by the Christian spirit, must not be in opposition to the conclusions of the leading social and economic teachers of the age. Still more important is it that in the discussions as to how to improve social conditions, as to the inauguration of reforms, the voice of those should be heard who know intimately and have carefully observed the lives of the people, and who judge the measures proposed in the light of the Christian standard. This is work for which women are exceptionally qualified and for which the life and experience of a Deaconess gives a special opportunity. Just as some clergy have served usefully on municipal and county bodies of all kinds, so may it be possible for a Deaconess to do valuable work in the same direction, even as a guardian of the poor or a member of the town council, work which will gain its special importance from her individual calling.

So far we have been thinking of the work of Deaconesses at home: when we come to think of what it may be abroad in the wide lands of Canada, Australasia, and South Africa, and in the mission fields of the whole world, the prospect seems absolutely limitless. Here the need for leadership, for pioneer work is even more pressing than at home. Those who have studied missionary problems are increasingly convinced that work is best done from strong centres. No mission centre can be strong and efficient without a strong leader at the head. Experience in a few instances at least has shown what a Deaconess can do in such a case. In touch with her Deaconess Institute at home she is in a position to attract other workers; her previous experience has taught her how to initiate the younger workers who are sent out to her into the new conditions of work. She can be of even more value to her Bishop than a Deaconess at home, because he is not likely to have many other educated women with whom to discuss the needs of women in his diocese. Experience has shown that whilst all missionaries are convinced of the supreme need for work amongst women, yet in the pressure of their own work, in the constant presence of urgent calls that they are unable to meet, the needs of the women's work are again and again overlooked in the consideration of

missionary policy. A woman in a position and with the necessary knowledge and experience to urge these needs might do much. In the East the fact of the life vocation of a Deaconess would also be of great use in making it easy for her to work freely with men, and in India at least her example might attract Indian Christian women to give themselves to the work of the Church, and so do for their people what it is so difficult under existing circumstances for the ordinary Indian woman to do. The lives of the two Indian ladies who have been ordained Deaconesses show what a gain it would be for the Church in India to have more such. Many problems connected with the life of women are arising through the general awakening in the Far East and the increased contact with Western thought and ideas. Women with a sense of vocation and ready to devote their lives to the service of their fellow-creatures are needed to help in the solution of these problems. The Eastern women have to be guided in their first efforts after emancipation, and there is need for anxious consideration as to the kind of education they should receive and as to the way in which the Christian converts may be led to help in the building up of the native Church. This task calls for women of many kinds and varied gifts. If some amongst these workers have as a support in

their difficulties the position of Deaconesses, and bring to their work not only the results of careful training and wide experience but also the devotion of a consecrated life, they will supply the element of continuity in what is attempted, and may as leaders amongst other workers play an important part in laying the foundations of the life of the Eastern women of the future.

In the Colonies, especially among the great new population that is flooding Western Canada, there is the same need, though the conditions are very different, for the work of Deaconesses. Here so little has yet been done that the work must still be of the nature of pioneer work. But anyone who knows anything of the lonely lives lived by women on the prairie farms, of the way in which the children often grow up without even the elements of Christian teaching, of the lives of the girls in the rapidly growing towns, will realise how much scope there is for the teaching work of Deaconesses. How they can best help, how they can prepare candidates for confirmation, teach the children, gather the girls and boys for Bible-study, and help to make religion a force in the life of this great country as it develops with such amazing rapidity, only a woman of initiative and the true devotion which knows no discouragement can discover. But that there is work to be done and

work well worth doing there can be no doubt. A Deaconess whose disinterestedness everyone can recognise, who gives her life and asks for no return, makes an appeal which even people immersed in the struggle for material existence are not likely to disregard. She will be a constant reminder of the spiritual side of life. The American Deaconesses are showing how this call can be met in their own Western States and amongst the remote country districts of their vast territories.

In indicating some of the great opportunities of work and usefulness that lie before the women who may feel called to be Deaconesses, it is not by any means suggested that all ordained women are likely to be fit for positions of leadership, nor even that the work of such leaders is more necessary to the work of the Church as a whole than the work of the humblest parish Deaconess. But at the present moment, when the importance of women's work is so fully recognised and its need so universally insisted upon, there is urgent demand for leaders amongst women to tread the new paths. The sense of life-long vocation with which a Deaconess undertakes her work fits her in a special sense for the position of a leader. She has put aside once for all the thought of marriage, her work is her life, she cannot be called away from it. She has had

special training and discipline, but she has not withdrawn from the world. She has been taught to stand alone, but also to work with others, with men as well as with women. In a parish, in a diocese, in the mission field, she, if she have the necessary gifts and capacities, has the opportunity to be the leader and guide of other women, to represent the needs of women to those who are in authority. Here is an opportunity for the use of every gift, intellectual as well as spiritual, and in the office and ministry of a Deaconess the ablest women can find full scope for all their powers.

CHAPTER XII[1]

LOOKING FORWARD

THERE have been times when a general impression has prevailed that some new thing was at hand. Ours is such a time. In very truth the beginnings of the new movement are already astir. We are often told that the old lines and landmarks are fast being obliterated, and that the watchwords of the past generation are now no longer intelligible. Everywhere there is weariness with what is familiar, dislike of the conventional, and restless experimenting with all manner of "new thought" gospels and extraordinary cults. Though the average ability is high, and we have more than an ordinary amount of cleverness, the number of outstanding personalities is comparatively small. What does it all mean but this, that we are at the close of a period, and on the verge of an outburst of vital force, a fresh spring-tide of liberated energy and unexampled achievement? And what will it be like? Will it be

[1] Written by Arthur W. Robinson, D.D., Vicar of All Hallows Barking, 1914.

more Christian? How will the Church contribute? What kind of workers will be specially needed? These are fascinating questions. It is not too early to try to give some answer to them.

A thousand indications assure us that the new thing before us is a fresh manifestation of the power and possibility of Corporate Life. We have known for long that "union is strength"; we are only now spelling out the lesson—not really a new lesson, though it seems a new one to us—that "unity is life." It is not only true that we can *do* more together: we can *be* more together than apart. The world is full of this idea, and of attempts to realise it. These attempts are interesting even though for the most part they end in failure. Perhaps they are the more interesting on that account, because failure predisposes men's minds to turn with a greater readiness to the one power which is able to exert a permanently binding influence. Alas! that at this moment the intervention of religion too often appears to have an opposite effect, and to lead only to contention and separation. But happily we are all coming to see how monstrous it is that this should be so, and the way is preparing for a better condition of things. It is the hope of "more life and fuller," which is only to be realised in unity, that will eventually draw us together. Already

a German psychologist has formulated afresh for us the doctrine that a community has a consciousness, a mind, and a character of its own, as real as that of any of the individuals who compose it, and marked by the presence of intuitions which belong to the spiritual order. The next step is taken when Dr Royce, the able professor of philosophy at Harvard, opens his New Testament and discovers, to his evident surprise, that the earliest Christianity had just this for its deliberate and eager aim, to produce in actual working a type of community life which should be so filled with the spirit of fellowship, and so entirely actuated by the loyalty of all to each and each to all, that what had seemed the insuperable barriers of race and class and interest should cease to be obstacles to a common understanding, and become the welcomed occasions of ever-deepening sympathy and quite unexpected helpfulness.

It cannot surely be long before we shall be filled with an overmastering desire to recover the secret of this earliest living Christianity. The thought of it should give us hope, as it should certainly cover us with confusion. As things are at present, 'we cannot but sorrowfully acknowledge,' to use the words a true prophet and seer of our own, 'that we have hardly taken to heart seriously the facts and promises of our corporate life.' 'A con-

gregation, as St Paul conceives it, is a union of men filled with one purpose, animated with one Spirit, who hallows the peculiar gift of each one for the fulfilment of a common work. But for us —must we not confess it with shame—a congregation is a gathering—may I not say a chance gathering?—of those who are for the most part mutually strangers, not bound together by any bond which is recognised as indissoluble, without organic life, without corporate action, without social responsibility; and so our individual hopes and efforts are ineffective against inherited customs and popular indifference.'[1]

If we were not so much accustomed to it all, we should be astounded at the unreality that too commonly passes for Church life amongst us. The churches themselves were never more reverently arranged, nor were the services ever more beautifully rendered. And never were our parishes more crowded with all kinds of organisations than they are now. But the life is not the same thing as the raiment, and the spirit may be lacking however great the multiplicity of wheels. When we remember that life is measured by love, and ask for the evidence of any real sense of the value and privilege of Church membership among our

[1] Bishop Westcott, *Christian Aspects of Life*, p. 42; *Words of Faith and Hope*, p. 157.

communicants; when we inquire to what extent the congregation is a unit, a vital whole, praying, seeing, thinking, acting as one—with a healthy delight in the employment of the diverse gifts of rich and poor, of men and women, under the felt and acknowledged direction of a divinely human Presence and Power—what can we honestly say or think of the spectacle which most of our Churches present?

The late Canon Body was once asked what his long experience had led him to feel that it was best to say to the clergy when he addressed them in Retreat, or at a Quiet Day. His answer was that he had learned that there was really only one thing to say, and that was to tell them to "Repent." Who can doubt that the message most needed by us all just now is this—"Repent, and do the first works?" "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand?" Could we wish for anything better than to see clergy, and church-wardens, and choirmen, Sunday-school teachers, district visitors, and all Church-workers on their knees praying together for light to discover, and for grace to get rid of whatever is hindering from union and concord, all the miserable social and partisan prejudices that make fellowship impossible and quench the life of the Spirit?

Is the Church to lag behind the World in this

pursuit of the larger ideal, or is it to inspire and to lead? Of course there must be difficulties in the path, and we shall only know their full seriousness as we face them with the determination to go forward. The mere thought of what they might be is enough to cause many to hesitate. 'If the Lord should open the windows of heaven,' they are inclined to cry out, 'could this thing be, here in England of all places, and in our English Church congregations, with their accentuated individualism, their class distinctions, and their ingrained habits of coldness and reserve?' But what if the Lord *has* opened the windows of heaven, and has shed forth the supernatural Power from on high? What if we are verily guilty of the sin of ignoring and thwarting His working amongst us? What if He is patiently waiting for our consent, to do the wonderful works in our days that He did in the days of old?

Very much could be said, indeed a volume would not suffice to set forth the deep need of this revival of life, and the results that might follow, if only we were prepared to receive it. Here and now it must be enough to point out that there are at all events two important conditions which will have to be fulfilled by us in our time, as they certainly were fulfilled in the great days when Christianity began.

In the first place, we must return to the old attitude of belief in, and continual reliance upon, the risen and ascended Christ. We need to be reminded that there are two kinds of Christian devotion. The one is good, but the other is better. It is much to be devoted to the work of the Lord. But it is much more to be devoted, as the earliest believers were, to the Lord for the work. The workers who will be wanted in the future will be those who have sought before everything else to grow in the sense and consciousness of their union with the unseen Head of us all, and who are more than willing to have their own plans set aside in order that His thoughts and purposes may be accomplished through them, or through others. With these qualifications of faith and humility all other gifts of intellect and culture will be used to the greatest advantage, whereas in the absence of these the most admirable abilities may become a source of weakness, and may even retard the advance of what is spiritually best.

The second condition is this—The workers must be drawn from all classes, and from both sexes, in order that the most varied gifts and capacities may be exercised in harmonious co-operation, for the sake of the power and illumination that can be ours only as the outcome of unity. The clergy must no longer attempt to monopolise the dis-

charge of all spiritual functions; still less must they be expected to add to these the burden of multifarious services which is now frequently cast upon them. When the corporate life in the Church has been strongest, it has been felt that many kinds of offices and officers were needed for its adequate expression. It will be so again, we may be sure. And among the revived developments will assuredly be seen a wide enlargement of the services to be rendered by women. "With the women"—we have almost forgotten the words as they stand in the record of the work of preparation for Pentecost. And a study of the account of the part taken by women in the early history of the Church, as this is described in the Acts of the Apostles, would bring surprise to many. It is true that the Deaconess is not expressly mentioned, but the Prophetess is there; and we know that the Deaconess was already at work within the limits of the time that is covered by the book.

The restoration of her office in our days is an omen of the good that is to follow. We have been puzzled at the slowness of its general recognition, and at the little demand for its exercise. Both will come in the years that are before us. With the growth of the wider community life the help of the Deaconess will be found to be indispensable. She will be needed for the leadership of the

women's side of the work, for the wise encouragement of fellowship in its highest and healthiest forms, for many a ministration, calling for fine tact and loving sympathy, amongst the multitudes who will look to a living Church for a Christ-like care of their souls and their bodies. Her disciplined training, her knowledge of problems, her experience of the lives of the rich and the poor, her detachment from other social relationships, and not least her loyal acceptance of the principle of organised work under accepted authority, with its seeming limitation but real multiplication of power, will combine to give her an influence which it would not be easy to exaggerate.

With no great stretch of imagination we can picture her life as it is often to appear, let us hope, in the very near future. We can see her as she rises from her prayer-desk, and goes forth to her work and to her labour until the evening, in the school, or the conference, at the study circle, or the social service committee, among the sick, and among the outcast; with large views and hopeful thoughts of the divine purposes, and with a confident trust in the divine guiding and blessing; not over busy, but ever ready to listen and give aid; not anxious to attract attention to herself, but most pleased when she can enlist and develope the capabilities of others; full of cheerful courage,

quiet wisdom, and gentle peace. She does not half realise the good she is doing; nay, she feels very keenly how much has been only too poorly attempted. Others can the more readily perceive the singular worth of the service she is rendering. And, best of all, there is One who will not be unmindful of her ministry of love. The ideal is a high one, but even imperfect attempts to reach it will do far more for the Church than could be attained by much that might quite rightly be reckoned success upon a less arduous level of achievement.

APPENDIX A

DEACONESSES IN THE APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTIONS

(BY J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON, D.D., DEAN OF WELLS)

THE *Apostolic Constitutions* is the title of a Greek work in eight books containing regulations for the discipline of the Christian Church. No one now holds that these regulations were drawn up by the Apostles: it is only by a fiction that the Apostles are represented as uttering them. The book in its present form cannot be earlier than the middle of the fourth century, and may perhaps be as late as the beginning of the fifth century. But fictions of this kind have a great historical value, as witnessing to the institutions which existed at the time when they were composed. Thus the *Apostolic Constitutions*, as we have them, represent fourth century manners and customs, coloured to some extent by the ideals which the writer himself cherished in regard to them.

But these *Constitutions* have another and still greater value. Modern research and criticism has shown that they embody far more ancient

elements, which can be separated off from the later matter with which they were overlaid by the last writer who gave us the work in its present form.

Thus Books I.-VI. embody an *Apostolic Didascalia* (or *Instruction*) which may belong to the middle of the third century. It is preserved to us in a Syriac translation; and a Latin translation has quite recently been discovered of the greater part of it, in the under writing of a palimpsest manuscript at Verona.[1]

Again, Book VII. embodies the *Didaché* or teaching of the Apostles, as can plainly be seen now that we have recovered that early work.

Book VIII. presents a more difficult problem; but it stands in some relation, not very close, to another early manual called *The Canons of Hippolytus.*

It is evident at once that we can no longer be content to take the evidence of the *Apostolic*

[1] The Syriac 'Didascalia' was edited anonymously by Lagarde in 1854. In the same year, under his former name of Bötticher, he had elaborately compared it with the current Greek text, in Bunsen's 'Christianity and Mankind' (*Analecta Ante-nicaena* II.). The Latin version was published by E. Hauler at Leipzig in 1900. The Syriac and Latin versions are in close correspondence, and take us back to an underlying Greek original. A translation of the Syriac, together with dissertations, was edited by two German scholars, H. Achelis and J. Flemming, in 1904, and a translation into English is given by Mrs Gibson in *Horae Semiticae*, I. pt. 2.

Constitutions in regard to our own present subject of Deaconesses, without investigating also the evidence which may be afforded by the earlier documents to which we have referred.

The first place in which Deaconesses are mentioned in the *Apostolic Constitutions* is in ii, 25. In speaking of the necessity of giving tithes and firstfruits to Bishops, the writer justifies this regulation by a reference to the Mosaic Dispensation, and continues thus according to the earlier and later recensions:

Syriac Didascalia (Lag. p. 36).

For these are your high-priests: but the priests and Levites now are Presbyters and Deacons, and Orphans and Widows.

But the Levite and high-priest is the Bishop. . . He doth govern in the place of the Almighty: he shall be honoured by you even as God. For the Bishop shall sit for you in the place of Almighty God.

Apost. Const. ii. 25 (Lag. p. 54).

For these are your high-priests: but your priests are the Presbyters; and your Levites are those who are now Deacons, *and your Readers and Singers and Doorkeepers, your Deaconesses* (αἱ διάκονοι ὑμῶν) and Widows *and Virgins* and Orphans. But the high-priest above all these is the Bishop. . . He is your God on earth after God. . . Let your Bishop preside (*lit.* sit first) over you, being honoured as with the honour of God, wherewith he governeth *the Clergy* (κλῆρος) *and ruleth the People.*

And the Deacon shall stand in the place of Christ: and ye shall love him.	And let the Deacon stand *by him, as the Powers do by God; and let him minister to him in all things blamelessly;* even as Christ *doing nothing of Himself doth always the things that are pleasing to the Father.*
And the Deaconess shall be honoured by you in the place of the Holy Spirit.	And let the Deaconess (ἡ διάκονος) be honoured by you as a type of the Holy Spirit, *doing and uttering nothing without the Deacon; as neither doth the Paraclete do or speak ought of Himself, but glorifying Christ waiteth upon His will. And as it is not possible to believe on Christ without the teaching of the Spirit, so without the Deaconess let no woman approach the Deacon or the Bishop.*
And the Presbyter shall be to you as a type of the Apostles.	And let the Presbyters be reckoned by you as a type of us, the Apostles: *let them be teachers of Divine Knowledge...*
And the Orphans and Widows shall be counted unto you as a type of the Altar.	And let your Widows and Orphans be counted by you as a type of the Altar: *and let the Virgins be honoured as a type of the Altar-of-Incense.*

We must confine our attention in the first instance to the *Syriac Didascalia*, the earlier document, which the later writer has considerably expanded at this point. The startling metaphor

by which the Bishop is compared to God, the Deacon to Christ, and the Deaconess to the Holy Spirit, is based on the vigorous language of the Epistles of S. Ignatius (c. A.D. 117). Thus, in the Epistle to the Magnesians, c. 6, we read:

> The Bishop presiding over you as a type of God, and the Presbyters as a type of the council of the Apostles, and the Deacons most dear to me having been entrusted with the Ministry (διακονίαν) of Jesus Christ.

Again in the Epistle to the Trallians, c. 3:

> Likewise let all of you reverence the Deacons as Jesus Christ, as also the Bishop, who is a type of the Father, and the Presbyters as the council of God and as the college of the Apostles.

And again in the Epistle to the Smyrnæans, c. 8:

> All of you follow the Bishop, as Jesus Christ followeth the Father; and the Presbytery as the Apostles: and reverence the Deacons as the command of God. Let no one without the Bishop do any of those things that concern the Church.

Here we see the source of the metaphor. But the writer of the *Didascalia* elaborates it, so as to complete the Trinity. The Bishop is a type of the Father, the Deacons of Christ: what then corresponds to the Holy Ghost? Now in early Christian literature, the Spirit is frequently regarded as representative of a female element in the Godhead. For example, in the Apocryphal

Gospel according to the Hebrews Christ is made to say: 'My Mother the Holy Spirit took Me by one of the hairs of My head, and brought Me up to the great mountain Tabor.' The explanation is generally sought in the fact that in Hebrew the word for 'Spirit' is of the feminine gender. In this place, then, our author takes the Deaconess as representing the female ministry of the Church to be the equivalent in his metaphor of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity.

He then keeps the metaphor of S. Ignatius for the Presbyters; and he goes on to reproduce the famous saying of the Epistle of S. Polycarp (c. 4), with regard to Widows: 'Knowing that they are the Altar of God.' A few lines further on he is back again with S. Ignatius in his injunction 'not to do anything without the Bishop.'

It is clear then that this early writer of the third century cherished a lofty conception of the Diaconate of Women. It is for him an essential part of that side of the Church's function towards her members, which is always specially thought of when Bishops and Deacons are mentioned in close connexion.

We now turn with interest to see how the fourth century writer deals with this remarkable passage. And first we see that his list of Church-officers is a longer one than that of his predecessor. After

Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons he adds, in the opening sentence, Readers and Singers and Doorkeepers. Then he expands the Orphans and Widows into Deaconesses and Widows and Virgins and Orphans.

We feel instinctively that the Deaconess has dropped. She is indeed first among the Women of the Church; but Readers and Singers and Doorkeepers have got in front of her; and we shall find that this will happen again.

When he comes to the great metaphor, he feels that it needs justification; and he finds that justification in a view of the subordination of the Persons in the Blessed Trinity which is very near to being heretical. The Deacon is the servant of the Bishop, the Deaconess is the servant of the Deacon: even as Christ does nothing without the Father, and the Holy Spirit waits upon the will of Christ.

Here again the Deaconess has dropped; and in Book VIII. we shall find in express words that she is the Deacon's servant (viii. 27).

The metaphor receives a further interpretation when it is said that as the Spirit is needed for the reception of Christ's teaching, so the Deaconess is the necessary intermediary between the Women of the Church and the Deacon; and, of course, yet more between them and the Bishop.

Later on in Book II. as it now stands (cc. 57 ff., Lag. pp. 86, 89), we have two mentions of Deaconesses in connection with the services in Church. Neither of these occurs in the earlier work. There it was ordered that one of the Deacons should remain at the altar and the other outside at the door, until all were assembled; and then they should minister together in the Church. In the later work we read, 'Let the Doorkeepers stand at the entrances of the men to guard them, and the Deaconesses at those of the women.' And below, where rules are given respecting the Deacon's duty of finding seats for strangers, we read, 'Let the Deaconess do the same for the women who come, whether poor or rich.'

Thus we see again that in the fourth century the Deaconess gets grouped with the Doorkeepers.

Book III. is devoted to Widows; but we find in the course of it some interesting matter respecting Deaconesses. The Widows were a numerous and somewhat troublesome body of Church pensioners. Among their besetting sins were grumbling at their fellow-widows who happened to receive larger doles, and making begging expeditions instead of being content with the supplies that reached them in the normal way. They had to be reminded that 'the Altar of God does not go running about, but is fixed in one place' (iii. 6, Lag. p. 101). They

were accordingly to stay at home and pray. Moreover they were to lead a life of obedience, 'obeying,' says the earlier work, 'the Bishop and the Deacons.' In the later work this is expanded into 'obeying the Bishop and the Presbyters and the Deacons, yea more, and the Deaconesses.'

In iii. 11 (Lag. p. 106), we read: 'We do not give permission to Presbyters to ordain Deacons, or Deaconesses (διακονίσσας), or Readers, or Ministers (ὑπηρέτας), or Singers, or Doorkeepers; but only to Bishops.' This section is entirely absent from the earlier work.

A passage in iii. 14 has sometimes been cited as referring to Deaconesses; but the words, 'she that ministereth (the alms)' are used generally, and not technically. The reference is to a Christian woman who relieves a Widow, but conceals her name that she may not lose her reward. The word 'ministration' (διακονία) is several times used in the sense of 'an alms.'

We now come to the most important passage, iii. 15 ff. It will be best to give the *Syriac Didascalia* here in full, in a literal translation, and to deal with the later form afterwards. The earlier form will be found to present a good deal of repetition: some of it has been pruned away in the later form, which has introduced a good deal of change at this point. Part of the diffuseness is

however simply due to the Syriac translator, who often puts two words where the Greek original would have had but one.

Syriac Didascalia (Lag. p. 70, l. 22).

(Chapter seventeen. Concerning the appointment (κατάστασις) of Deacons and Deaconesses.)

Wherefore, O Bishop, thou shalt appoint unto thee labourers of righteousness, helpers helping with thee unto life. Those that seem good to thee out of all the people thou shalt choose and appoint Deacons: a man as for the doing of many things that are needed, and a woman as for the ministration to the women. For there are houses where thou canst not send the Deacon unto women, because of the heathen; but thou shalt send the Deaconess. For also in many other things the office of a woman (that is a) Deaconess is required. First, when women go down into the water, it is required that by a Deaconess those who go down into the water should be anointed with the oil of anointing. And where there is not a woman present, and yet more a Deaconess, it is necessary for him that baptiseth, that he should anoint her that is baptised. But where there is a woman, and yet more a Deaconess, it is not necessary for women that they should be seen by men. But in the laying on of hands thou shalt anoint the head only, as of old were anointed priests and kings in Israel. So do thou also after that example in the laying on of hands anoint the head of those that receive baptism, whether men or women. And afterwards if thou baptise, or if thou order Deacons to baptise, or Presbyters, a woman (that is a) Deaconess, as we have before said, shall anoint the women: but a man shall mention over them the names of the invocation of the Godhead in the water. And when she that is baptised cometh up from the water, the Deaconess shall receive her, and shall teach her and instruct her how the seal

of baptism may be unbroken in chastity and holiness. For this cause we say that there is the more need and necessity for the ministration of a woman (that is a) Deaconess, because that our Lord and Saviour also was ministered to by ministering women; which were Mary Magdalen, and Mary the daughter of James and the mother of Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children, with other women also. For thee also the ministration of a Deaconess is required for many things. For to the houses of the heathen, where there are women that believe, it is required that a Deaconess should go in and visit those that are sick, and minister to them in whatsoever may be required for them; and that for those that have begun to recover from sickness there may be a washing (?).

(Concerning Deacons.)

Now the Deacons shall be like in their conversation to the Bishop: but labouring yet more shall they labour, far more abundantly than he. And they shall not be lovers of filthy lucre; but they shall be zealous in ministration: and according to the number of the multitude of the people of the Church, so shall the Deacons be; that they may be able to distribute and relieve every one; so that to aged women that are infirm, and to brothers and sisters that are in sickness, to every one of them they shall provide the ministration that is right for him. But a woman the rather shall be zealous in the ministration to the women, and a man (that is a) Deacon in the ministration to the men. And let him be ready to obey and to submit himself to the command of the Bishop; and to any place that he is sent to minister or to say anything to any man, let him be labouring and toiling. For it is necessary that every one should know his place, and be zealous to fill it. And be ye of one counsel and one mind and one soul dwelling in two bodies; and know ye what is the ministration: even as our Lord and Saviour saith in the Gospel, 'He of you that willeth to be head, let him be to you a servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.' So is

it necessary that you Deacons also should do, if it shall be to you that ye should lay down your lives for your brethren, in the ministration that is necessary for them. For neither did our Lord and Saviour disdain to minister to us; as it is written in Isaiah, 'To justify the righteous that performeth good service to many.'[1] If therefore the Lord of heaven and earth did service even unto us, and endured and bore everything for us; how much more is it necessary that we should do so for the brethren? that we should resemble Him, whose imitators we are, and holding the place of Christ. And again in the Gospel ye find that it is written, how that our Lord girded Himself with a towel, and poured water into a bason of washing,[2] as we sat at meat; and drew near and washed the feet of all of us, and wiped them with the towel. Now this He did that He should shew us charity and love of the brethren, that we also should do so to one another. If then our Lord did so, ye Deacons, do ye doubt to do so to those that are sick and infirm, ye who are workers of truth, and hold the likeness of Christ? wherefore be ye ministering in love, and be not murmuring or doubting: otherwise ye minister as for men, and not for God; and your reward, according to your ministration, shall ye receive in the day of judgment. It is necessary therefore for you Deacons that ye visit all those that are in need, and concerning those that are distressed that ye make known to the Bishop; and that ye be his soul and his mind, and in everything be toiling and obedient unto him.

Here we note at the outset how naturally the appointment of the Deaconess comes in for the discharge of certain duties of the Deacon which he, as a man, cannot conveniently discharge. 'Appoint Deacons, a man as for the doing of many things that

[1] So Isaiah liii. 11, in the Septuagint translation.

[2] So the Old Syriac Version renders in John xiii. 5.

are needed, and a woman as for the ministration to the women.' It will be seen that in the later form this is broken up, and so the Deaconess is further separated from the Deacon.

Next we see that the account of the Baptismal rite is perfectly straightforward. Persons to be baptised were anointed over the whole body before they entered the water. This, in the case of women was sometimes done by a man (see the story told by John Moschus of Conon the monk); it was more desirable that it should be done by a woman, and, if possible, by a Deaconess. There was another anointing which followed Baptism immediately. This was the anointing of the head only, and was done by the Baptiser at the laying on of hands. To anoint the head was enough, as in the case of priests and kings in Israel. The part that might be taken by a woman did not include the actual formula of Baptism, which must be uttered by a man. The Deaconess received the baptised woman as she came out of the water, and was responsible for her further instruction. The later account has greatly confused the simplicity of the earlier one.

Thirdly, we may observe with delight that the ministration of women to the Church of Christ is grounded by the author upon the ministration of

women to Christ Himself during His earthly life. A true note is here struck: we sadly miss it in the later work.

Fourthly, the ministration of the Deaconess to women in their own houses, both in sickness and in the recovery from sickness, is plainly insisted upon. This again almost disappears in the *Apostolic Constitutions.*

The passage which follows deals with the duties of Deacons generally, and with the spirit in which they should be performed. The Deaconess is again expressly spoken of in regard to ministrations to women, and there is no indication of the later notion that she is in any way subordinated to the Deacon.

We need not follow in detail the modifications by which the later redactor has spoiled this beautiful picture. Customs have considerably changed by his time. If the Deaconess still anoints, it is proper that the Deacon should begin the anointing. The comparison of the second anointing to that by which kings and priests were consecrated in Israel is marred by the guarding words by which the writer would fain save the honour of the priestly caste. It is plain that the Deacon is rising, and the Deaconess is falling; her work among the sick and poor is passing out of sight, and so, too, is her direct relation to the Bishop, as

his servant in all matters where a woman's service is more suitable and more efficient than a man's. It is unnecessary to translate the whole of the Greek passage. I give merely those parts which specially concern the Deaconess.

Apost. Const. iii. 15 (Lag. p. 109).

Wherefore, O Bishop, appoint thy fellow-labourers and workers of life and righteousness, Deacons well-pleasing to God, those whom out of all the people thou dost approve as being worthy and full of activity for the needs of the ministration (*διακονία*). And appoint also a Deaconess (*διακόνισσαν*), faithful and holy, for the services (*ὑπηρεσίας*) of the women. For there are times when to certain houses thou canst not send a man (that is a) Deacon (*ἄνδρα διάκονον*), because of the unbelievers: thou shalt send therefore a woman (that is a) Deaconess (*γυναῖκα διακόνισσαν*), because of the imaginings of the wicked. For indeed for many needs do we need a woman (that is a) Deaconess (*γυναικὸς διακόνου*). And first, when women are baptised (*lit.* enlightened) the Deacon shall anoint only their forehead with the holy oil; after him the Deaconess (*ἡ διάκονος*) shall fully anoint them: for it is not necessary that women should be seen by men. But only in the laying on of hands the Bishop shall anoint her head, even as priests and kings of old were anointed: not that those who are now baptised are ordained (*χειροτονοῦνται*) priests, but as Christians (so called) from Christ (*i.e.* the Anointed One), a royal priesthood and a holy nation, God's Church, the pillar and support of the bridechamber, who once were not a people, but now (are a people) beloved and elect. Thou therefore, O Bishop, after that type, shalt anoint the head of the baptised, whether men or women, with the holy oil for a type of the spiritual baptism: then either thou the Bishop, or the Presbyter under thee, having spoken and named over them the sacred invocation of Father and Son

and Holy Ghost, shalt baptise them in the water. And the man let the Deacon receive, but the woman the Deaconess, that the imparting of the seal that is not to be broken may be made in seemly wise. And after this let the Bishop anoint them that are baptised with the ointment. . . . [After some remarks on 'baptism into the death of Jesus,' and the giving of the Lord's Prayer, we go on as in the Syriac]. But let the Deacons be in all things blameless, as also the Bishop, only more full of activity, proportionate to the number of the Church, that they may be able also to serve among the infirm, as workmen not to be put to shame. And let the women be zealous to attend to the women ; and both of them in matters concerning bearing tidings, travelling, service, bondservice (*δουλείαν*) ; for as concerning the Lord, Esaias spake saying, 'To justify the righteous that performeth good service to many' (*δικαιῶσαι δίκαιον εὖ δουλεύοντα πολλοῖς*, liii. 11, LXX.). . . .

Our next reference is in Book VI. c. 17 (Lag. p. 177). Here we have directions as to marriage in the case of various members of the clergy (*κλῆρος*). Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons are to be but once married ; and in no case are they to marry after ordination. Ministers (*ὑπηρέται*), Singers, Readers and Doorkeepers are to be once married only : they may marry after entering upon their office. 'But let a Deaconess be a pure virgin ; but if not, then a widow once married, faithful and honourable.' The whole of this section is absent from the earlier work.

This brings to a close our examination of the evidence offered by the early *Didascalia*. The

references to the Deaconess are fewer than in the later book; but the picture which they present is a far more satisfactory one, and it corresponds far more closely to the form of the institution as we see it in the Pastoral Epistles. The Diaconate exists as the Bishop's instrument for the discharge of his responsibility in matters which he cannot attend to except through the aid of subordinate ministers. Among these subordinate ministers are both men and women. In the development of the Christian ministry the men came to have further duties assigned to them, especially in relation to the liturgical service in Church. The Deacon thus gained in importance, and gradually rose above the Deaconess. She, on the other hand, lost ground, and ultimately passed out of sight. In the *Apostolic Didascalia* we get the one clear and detailed picture which Christian literature affords us of the Deaconess in her rightful position.

We now pass to Book VIII. of the *Apostolic Constitutions.* In order to appreciate the information which it offers, it is necessary to say something of a much earlier work from which it appears to have indirectly borrowed.

The so-called *Canons of Hippolytus* is a work of which the original Greek is lost, and which survives only in an Arabic version. The date and

authorship of this work has been a matter of much controversy: but we may provisionally assign it to the beginning of the third century.[1] There is a closely related Egyptian *Church Order*, which appears to stand in midway between the *Canons of Hippolytus* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*. We may note at once that in the *Canons of Hippolytus* there is no mention of Deaconesses. On the other hand, Widows are expressly mentioned, and to them are assigned duties in connection with the sick. In the rite of Baptism we find both the anointings referred to, but nothing is said of the ministration of a woman when women are baptised. We may further note that discipline was to be enforced on the women of the Church by a woman who is spoken of as the 'inspectress.' For, after stringent rules against indulgence in fine dress and neglect of family duties, we read that 'an inspectress is to be appointed over the women, that they be not unchaste, nor lovers of pleasure, nor prone to laughter, nor talk at all in church, because it is the house of God. It is not a place of conversation, but a place of prayer with reverence.'[2]

[1] So Achelis (1891) in 'Texte und Untersuchungen,' vi. 4. Funk (*Die Apostolischen Konstitutionen*, 1891) contests the view of Achelis, and relegates the work to the sixth century; but his reasoning is not convincing.

[2] Achelis, p. 86 f.

The first passage in Book VIII. which mentions Deaconesses has no parallel in the *Canons of Hippolytus*. It concerns the order of the reception of the Eucharist (viii. 12; Lag. p. 259): 'After this let the Bishop receive; then the Presbyters, and the Deacons, and Sub-deacons, and the Readers, and the Singers and the Ascetics; and, among the women, the Deaconesses, and the Virgins, and the Widows, then the Children (*i.e.* probably the Orphans), and then all the People.'

VIII. 18 ff. (Lag. p. 263). We now come to the Ordination of Deaconesses.

In the *Canons of Hippolytus* only Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons are ordained by the laying on of hands. The Readers, Sub-deacons, Widows and Virgins are appointed, not ordained (Achelis, pp. 70 ff.). In the *Apostolic Constitutions*, however, Ordination is conferred on the Deaconess, the Sub-deacon and the Reader; but not on the Confessor, the Virgin, the Widow or the Exorcist.[1]

We may here set side by side the sections of the *Apostolic Constitutions* which deal with the Ordination of the Deacon and the Deaconess:

Now concerning the Ordination (χειροτονία) of Deacons, I Philip enjoin:	Concerning a Deaconess (διακόνισσα), I Bartholomew enjoin:

[1] In a later form of the Egyptian *Church Order* (Tattam, 'The Apostolical Constitutions in Coptic,' p. 126), it is expressly said that Deaconesses are not ordained.

A Deacon shalt thou appoint, O Bishop, laying thy hands upon him, with all the Presbytery and the Deacons standing by thee; and praying over him thou shalt say:

Almighty God, Thou that art true and canst not lie, that art rich unto all that call upon Thee in truth, fearful in counsel, wise in understanding, mighty and great: Hearken unto our prayer, O Lord, and let our supplication come into Thine ears; and make Thy face to shine *upon this Thy servant, which is appointed unto ministry* (or 'unto the office of a Deacon': εἰς διακονίαν); *and fill him with the Spirit and with power*, as Thou didst fill Stephen, the martyr and follower of the sufferings of Thy Christ; and grant him after *serving unto well-pleasing the ministry* (or 'office': διακονία) *committed unto him*, without swerving, without blame, without reproach, to be counted worthy of a higher standing: through the mediation of Thy only begotten Son, with whom to Thee and the Holy Spirit be glory, honour, and majesty, world without end. Amen.

O Bishop, thou shalt lay thy hands upon her, with the Presbytery and the Deacons and the Deaconesses standing by; and thou shalt say:

Eternal God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Creator of man and woman, that didst fill with the Spirit Mary and Deborah, and Anna and Huldah, that didst not disdain that Thine only begotten Son should be born of a woman; Thou that in the tabernacle of witness and in the temple didst appoint (προχειρίζεσθαι) the women-guardians of Thy holy gates: Do Thou now look *on this Thy handmaid, which is appointed unto ministry* (or 'unto the office of a Deaconess': εἰς διακονίαν); *and grant unto her the Holy Spirit*, and cleanse her from all pollution of the flesh and of the spirit, *that she may worthily accomplish the work committed unto her*, to Thy glory and the praise of Thy Christ, with whom to Thee and the Holy Spirit be glory and worship world without end. Amen.

The parallel between these two Ordination Prayers is very close; but there is one remarkable difference: even at this comparatively early period the Deacon is, as at the present day, led to look forward to a higher office. In the *Canons of Hippolytus* the Prayer at the Ordination of a Deacon is wholly different, the only point in common being a mention of S. Stephen: there is a special petition that he may be able to control all the power of the enemy by the sign of the cross, and that he may have the gift of teaching. The office is perhaps conceived of more highly in itself; and there is no suggestion that it may hereafter be exchanged for any other. In the Egyptian *Church Order*, which seems to be intermediate between the *Canons of Hippolytus* and the *Apostolic Constitutions*, no special Prayer is given for the Ordination of a Deacon. It is probable, therefore, that these Prayers for the Deacon and the Deaconess belong to the age of the last compiler, if indeed they are not his own composition.

Although the actual word 'ordained' (χειροτονεῖσθαι) does not happen to be used in speaking of the Deaconess, it is most certainly implied in the direction for the laying on of hands; and the word is used immediately afterwards in regard to the Sub-deacons. On the other hand, it is

expressly said later on by way of contrast that a Virgin or a Widow 'is not ordained' (*οὐ χειροτονεῖται*).

VIII. 27 (Lag. p. 266). This section specifies the powers of various Orders. Of the Deacon we read: 'A Deacon does not bless; he gives not blessing, but receives it from Bishop and Presbyter; he does not baptise, does not offer; but when the Bishop offers, or the Presbyter, he distributes to the people, not as a priest, but as ministering (*διακονούμενος*) to priests. But to none of the rest of the Clergy is it lawful to do the work of the Deacon. A Deaconess does not bless; neither does she perform any of those things which the Presbyters or the Deacons do; save only the keeping of the gates, and the ministering (*ἐξυπηρετεῖσθαι*) to the Presbyters in the baptism of women, for the sake of that which is seemly. A Deacon separates (*i.e.* puts temporarily out of Communion, or perhaps out of office) a Sub-deacon, a Reader, a Singer, or a Deaconess, if occasion shall arise, in the absence of a Presbyter. A Sub-deacon is not allowed, nor again a Reader, a Singer or a Deaconess, to separate either one of the Clergy or one of the Laity: for they are the Ministers (*ὑπηρέται*) of the Deacons.'

VIII. 30 (Lag. p. 267). The remainder of the

consecrated Bread in the mysteries is to be distributed by the Deacons among the Clergy in the following proportions: 'to the Bishop four parts, to a Presbyter three, to a Deacon two, to the rest, Sub-deacons, or Readers, or Singers, or Deaconesses, one.'

These last two sections have no parallels in the *Canons of Hippolytus.*

NOTE.—*On some other early documents bearing on the question of the Female Diaconate.*

1. THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH ORDER. — This book, which bears in Greek the title 'The Constitutions by the hand of Clement and the Ecclesiastical Canons of the holy Apostles,' is printed in Lagarde's *Reliquiae Juris Ecclesiastici* (1856), and in Harnack's *Texte und Untersuchungen*, ii. 1, 2 (*cf.* 5). Lagarde also printed a Syriac version of the first half of it from Codex Sangermanensis, no. 38, in the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris. It does not appear to be known that the second half is extant in Syriac in the 'Malabar' Bible, in the University Library at Cambridge, though unhappily in a very mutilated condition. The book probably belongs to the third century; but it embodies older elements. The first half of it contains the 'Two Ways' (*i.e.* the first portion of

the *Didaché*), divided among the various Apostles as speakers; the second half embodies in a similar way some early manual of Church Discipline. From the passage here to be quoted it will be seen that the question of the ministration of women was a subject of controversy at the period when it was written.

After various directions as to the Bishop, the Presbyters, the Reader, and the Deacons, we read as follows:

Cephas[1] said: Let three Widows be appointed; two to wait upon prayer, concerning all who are in temptation, and for revelations concerning anything that may be needed: but one to attend upon the women that are tempted in sicknesses; and let her be ready to minister (εὐδιάκονος), and watchful, announcing what may be needed to the Presbyters, not a lover of filthy lucre, not given to much wine, that she may be able to be watchful for nightly services (ὑπηρεσίας), and for whatever other good deeds she may wish to perform.

Here we see that the work of the Deaconess is assigned to one of the three Widows. The other two are to reserve themselves for prayer and revelations (ἀποκαλύψεις). Lower down we read:

Andrew said: It is useful, brethren, to appoint a ministration (διακονίαν) for the women.[2]

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[1] Cephas in this document curiously appears as a different person from Peter.

[2] Or the sentence may be read as a question: 'Is it useful,' etc.

Peter said: We have already given orders:[1] but concerning the offering of the Body and of the Blood let us make quite clear.

John said: Ye have forgotten, brethren, that when the Teacher asked for the Bread and the Cup, and blessed them saying, This is My Body and Blood, He suffered not these (women) to stand along with us. (Martha said: Because of Mary, for He saw her smiling. Mary said: I did not laugh any more). For He said to us before, when He was teaching, that the weak should be saved by the strong.

Cephas said: Ye remember some which say that it is not seemly for women to pray standing up, but sitting upon the ground.

James said: How then, in the matter of women can we define ministrations (διακονίας), save a ministration (διακονίαν) that they should afford to women that are in need?

This extraordinary passage seems intended to refuse the Diaconate in a formal sense to women, while it gives a corresponding responsibility to one of the Widows. It shows, however, that a Female Diaconate was known to exist in some Churches, though it was rejected by the author of this book. It is not improbable that the book belongs to Egypt.

The reference to Mary and Martha recalls passages of the Gnostic *Pistis Sophia*, in which they are introduced, together with the Apostles, as putting questions to our Lord. This also is an Egyptian work.

2. THE TESTAMENT OF THE LORD.—This is

[1] Probably referring to the passage about Widows, already cited.

another of the Apocryphal Books attributed to S. Clement of Rome. It is not easy to fix its date, but it certainly contains some very early matter. It begins with instructions supposed to be given by our Lord to the Apostles after the resurrection, and contains among other things an interesting description of Antichrist. Then it passes on to deal with Church Order. Lagarde has published such parts of it as are contained in the MS. at Paris, mentioned above, and he has translated the Syriac into Greek (*Reliquiae* pp. 80 ff.) I suspect that more of this book is preserved in the 'Malabar' Bible, to which I have already referred, but the mutilated condition of the codex renders its decipherment very troublesome.

After general directions have been given as to persons who come late to church, and for whose amendment the Deacon is accordingly to invite the prayers of the congregation, we read (Lag. p. 86): 'Likewise either for a sister or for a Deaconess, such as are late or tarry outside, let him make announcement, that all the people may pray for them.'

Later on (Lag. p. 89) we have an instruction to the effect that the Deaconess is to bring the communion to a woman who is sick and cannot come to receive it.

Documents of this kind, apocryphal as they are,

are of historical value, as affording evidence of the condition of the community in which they were produced, and for whose edification they were intended.

3. THE ACTS AND MARTYRDOM OF MATTHEW. —This book is printed by Tischendorf in his *Apocryphal Acts of Apostles* (pp. 166), and is discussed by Lipsius in his treatise on the same subject (vol. ii., pp. 108 ff.). It appears to represent a slightly later recension of a Gnostic work which belonged to the second half of the second century. It is remarkable for the keen interest which the writer evidently has in all matters of Church order and discipline. The king of the Anthropophagi, or Man-eaters, is converted on the occasion of his burning the Apostle Matthew to death. We cannot recite the whole of the interesting tale, for we are here concerned only with its close. The saint appears after death, and changes the king's name from Fulvanus to Matthew; his son, who had hitherto borne his father's name, is also to be called Matthew; the king's wife is to be called Sophia (wisdom), and his son's wife Synesis (understanding). 'And in that hour Matthew appointed (*κατέστησεν*) the king Presbyter, now he was thirty-seven years old; and the king's son he appointed Deacon, he being seventeen years old; and the king's wife he appointed "Presbytis" (="Aged Woman" in Titus ii.

3); and his son's wife he appointed Deaconess (*διακόνισσαν*), and she also was seventeen years old.'

This mention of the *Presbytis*, as though a more dignified position than that of Deaconess, is of great interest, especially as the word so rarely meets us. The Council of Laodicea, about the middle of the fourth century, forbade the appointment of *πρεσβύτιδες* or *προκαθήμεναι* (presiding women). Epiphanius, however, recognises the title of *Presbytis* as applied to the more elderly of the Widows, but distinguishes it carefully from that of *Presbyteris*, or female elder. (*Cf. supr.* p. 78 n.)

A later recension of these Acts shews that offence was caused by the passage which is quoted above. For in the Vienna MS., quoted by Tischendorf in his notes, we read it thus: 'The blessed Matthew ordained (*ἐχειροτόνησεν*) the king Presbyter, and his son Deacon; and likewise also his wife and daughter-in-law Deaconesses.'

Here we have several indications of a somewhat later state of things. The stricter word is used for Ordination; the ages, which in the case of the Deacon and Deaconess were less than was afterwards required, are omitted; and the king's wife becomes a Deaconess like the daughter-in-law.

J. A. R.

APPENDIX B

LITURGICAL REMAINS

I. The Greek Church[1]

A. *Constantinopolitan Rite*[2]

The ordination of a Deaconess

After the Holy Oblation is made, and the doors have been opened, before the Deacon says: Making mention of all Saints, *she that is about to be ordained is brought to the Bishop, and he, reciting* The Divine Grace, *while she bows her head, lays his hand on her head, and making three signs of the cross, prays as follows:—*

Holy and Almighty God, Who hast hallowed woman by the birth of Thine Only Begotten Son our God from a Virgin after the flesh, and Who hast given the grace and visitation of Thy Holy

[1] For a translation of the Prayer for the Ordination of a Deaconess contained in the *Apostolic Constitutions*, see Appendix A, p. 209.

[2] Goar's *Euchologion*, p. 262. Translation taken from *Offices from the Service books of the Holy Eastern Church*, by Dr R. F. Littledale, p. 152 ff. (with some alterations). (See above, p. 71 f.)

Spirit not to men alone, but to women also ; look now, O Lord, on this Thy handmaid, and call her to the work of Thy ministry (διακονία), and send down on her the rich gift of Thy Holy Spirit, keep her in Thy orthodox faith, and always fulfilling her office in blameless conversation, according to Thy good pleasure. For to Thee is all honour, glory, and worship, even Thee, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, now and ever, and world without end.

And after the Amen, *one of the Deacons prays as follows :—*

In peace let us pray the Lord, *etc. (as for the Deacon but with this suffrage).* For her who is now appointed Deaconess, and for her salvation, let us pray the Lord, *etc.*

While the Deacon is repeating this prayer, the Bishop, still keeping his hand on the head of her that is being ordained, prays as follows :—

O Lord God, Who dost not reject women who offer themselves in accordance with the Divine will to minister in Thy holy places, but admittest them into the rank of ministers (λειτουργοί), give the grace of Thy Holy Spirit even to this Thy handmaid, who desireth to offer herself to Thee, and to fulfil the grace of the ministry, as Thou didst give the grace of Thy ministry unto Phoebe, whom Thou calledst to the work of ministration.

Grant to her, O God, to abide blamelessly in Thy holy temples, to be mindful of her own conversation, and especially of continence, and make Thy servant perfect, that she, standing at the judgment seat of Christ, may receive the reward of her good conversation. Through the mercy and loving-kindness of Thine Only Begotten Son, *etc.*

And after the Amen, *he puts the diaconal stole (orarium) on her neck, under the wimple (maphorion),*[1] *bringing the two ends forward; and then the Deacon who stands on the Ambon says :—*

Making mention of all Saints, *etc.*

After she has partaken of the Holy Body and the Holy Blood, the Archbishop gives her the Holy Chalice, which she receives and puts back on the Holy Table.

B. Ordination of a Deaconess quoted by Matthew Blastares from MSS. after the following manner :—[2]

'In the case of a Deaconess everything is done, with a few exceptions, as in the case of Deacons. For when she is brought to the Holy Table, she

[1] The Mafora (*μαφόριον*) was a short veil, covering the head and neck, and flowing down upon the shoulders. It was originally an article of female dress.

[2] Goar's *Euchologion*, Matth. Blast. c. xi. *τοῦ Γ στοιχείου.* (See above, p. 93.)

must be clad in a maphorion, the ends of which hang down in front, and after they have said, 'The Divine grace which careth for the weak,' etc., she bends neither knee, but only her head, and the Bishop lays his hand on her head and prays that she may blamelessly accomplish the work of the ministry (*διακονία*), and follow after continence and a holy conversation, and continue in the holy temples; but he does not permit her to serve the spotless mysteries, as in the case of the Deacon. Then upon her neck, under the maphorion, the Bishop places the diaconal stole (orarium), bringing the ends forward. But at the time of the participation, next to the Deacons he communicates her with the Holy Mysteries. Then she receives the Chalice from the Bishop's hand, and hands it to no one, but immediately places it upon the Holy Table.'

II. The Syrian Church

A. Nestorian Rite.[1] [Contained in Pontifical of 1559 A.D.]

The Order of the laying on of hands upon Deaconesses.

[1] Assemani, *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, vol. iii. pt. ii., p. 852 f. I am indebted for this translation to Mr N. M'Lean, Fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge.

A sister is chosen from the convents who is somewhat advanced in years, and experienced in the work of monastic life,—and about whom there are testimonies to [*her*] *good works. At the order of the Chief Priest, she is brought to the Deacon-house at the time of Sacraments; and the Archdeacon presents her before the Bishop, with her hands clasped and her head bowed, and the upper part of her body inclined, but without kneeling on her knees, as that is not comely.*

The Archdeacon intones Peace, *and the Bishop prays, beginning* Our Father, which art in heaven, *and then says,* To Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul, *to* [*the tune*] GIORA,[1] *as far as* mine eyes always. *And they say* Glory. *Then the Chief begins the canon* Teach me, O Lord. Thy strength, O Lord, impart to Thy handmaid, *etc. And he prays, beginning,* To Thee do I lift up. Pour out Thy Grace, O Lord, upon Thy handmaid. *And when he ends the Archdeacon intones* Peace. *And the Bishop prays* Our Gracious God, *and then the Archdeacon intones* Peace. *And the Chief prays* O Lord God, mighty, omnipotent, who madest all by the might of Thy word, and by Thy command upholdest all the beings which Thy decree created, and hast received both men and women to bestow upon them the gift of the Holy

[1] *i.e.* Sojourner.

Ghost, Thou, O Lord, also now in Thy compassion, choose this Thy feeble handmaid for the good work of ministration, and grant unto her that without blemish she may perform before Thee this great and exalted ministration, being kept without harm in all ways of excellence, and may be admonishing and teaching chastity and good and right works to her fellow-women, that so she may be counted worthy to receive from Thee the recompense of good works in the great and glorious day of the revelation of Thine Only Begotten, to Whom with Thee and the Holy Ghost be glory and honour and thanksgiving and worship, *He raises his voice*, Now and ever, *and they answer*, Amen.

And the Bishop places his hand upon her head, not in the manner of ordination, but blessing her, and praying over her an inward prayer according to his strength.

Then they begin this psalm to [*the tune*] GIORA Shepherd of Israel, hearken, *etc.* *And they pray*, Strengthen, O Lord, Thy handmaid with Thy grace, and uphold her with thy compassion to do and fulfil always Thy supreme will, Thou Lord of all.

Another [*prayer*].—Make Thy handmaid worthy, O Lord, by Thy grace to tremble at Thy word, and to dread Thy sentence, and to be ever a dwelling for Thy glorious Trinity, Thou Lord of all.

And he closes with Glory and Thanksgiving.
And he charges her that she be without pride.

B. Jacobite Note

Assemani states[1] that 'in the Pontifical of the Jacobites (p. 144) it is allowed indeed to Deaconesses that in the absence of the Presbyter and Deacon they should cleanse the Sanctuary and light its lamps, and receive the Sacraments from the receptacle in the Sanctuary, and deliver them to women and boys of not more than five years of age, and also administer the consecrated cup when necessity demands: but access to the Altar, or contact with it, was wholly denied to them.'

III. The Latin Church

A. Service for the making of a Deaconess[2]

The Bishop, when he blesses a Deaconess, puts the stole (orarium) *on her neck. Now when she goes to*

[1] *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, vol. iii. pt. ii., p. 849. (See above, p. 66.)

[2] Muratori, *Antiquities of Italy* (Milan, 1741 ed.) vol. v. p. 577. This service is said to be from an old MS. of the Casanatensis Library [? now at Rome]. It contains, *before this*, Services for (1) Consecration of a Sacred Virgin; (2) Ordination of an Abbess professing Canonical Rule; (3) Consecration of Virgins who are to live in their own houses: *after this*, Services for (1) Consecration of Widows who have professed chastity; (2) Ordination of an Abbess professing Monastic Rule.

At the end of the heading of the last comes: 'Chapter from the Canon of Theodore, Archbishop of the English.'

Church she wears that upon her neck, but in such a way that the end of the stole on either side is under her robe. Mass for the consecration of a Deaconess: Save me, O God, for Thy Name's sake, *etc. Psalm:* For strangers are risen up, *etc. Prayer:* O God, the lover of chastity and preserver of continence, graciously hear our supplication, and mercifully behold this Thine handmaid; that, vowing the modesty of continence in Thy fear, she may preserve it by Thy help, and of Thy gift may receive the sixty-fold fruit of continence, and life eternal, through, *etc. Lesson of the Kings on the Sunday after Pentecost:* Brethren, know ye not that, *etc. Versicle:* God loved her, and adorned, *etc. Then, she being prostrate before the Altar, let the Litany be performed: and when it is ended, let the Bishop say over her this prayer:* Hear, O Lord, our prayers, and on this Thine handmaid send forth the Spirit of Thy blessing, that being enriched by Thy heavenly gift she may be able to attain to the grace of Thy majesty, and shew forth to others an ensample of good living, through, *etc. The consecration follows after the manner of a Preface:* O God, by whom Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, when she had known for scarce seven years the yoke of matrimony, was then for four and eighty years preserved in holy and undefiled widowhood. . . . Grant there-

fore, O Lord, at our petition to this Thy handmaid among the married thirty-fold, with the widows sixty-fold fruit. May there be in her mercy and rigour, humility and bountifulness, freedom and uprightness, kindliness and soberness. Let her meditate on Thy work day and night, that in the day of her calling she may be worthy to be found such as through the spirit of prophecy Thou hast willed her to be. Grant this, through our Lord, *etc.* *Then let the Bishop put the stole on her neck, saying this antiphon:* With the garment of joyfulness the Lord clothe thee, *etc.* *Let her put the veil on her own head in the presence of all, having received it from the Altar, with the antiphon:* To Him I am betrothed, *etc.* *Prayer:* We beseech Thee, O Lord, graciously to hear the prayers of Thy handmaid, that, having taken to herself the grace of chastity, with Thy help she may keep it: through, *etc.* *On giving the ring:* Receive the ring of Faith, the signet of the Holy Spirit, that thou mayest be called the Spouse of Christ, if thou shalt faithfully serve Him.

[And so on, somewhat as for the consecration of a Virgin. At the close there is an order that the Deaconess is to communicate, and to be dismissed in peace by the Bishop.]

B. Pontifical of Egbert.[1] [Archbishop of York, 732-766 A.D.]

(*a*) *Benediction of a Deacon or a Deaconess*

Hearken, O Lord, unto our prayers, and send out on this Thy *servant* the Spirit of Thy blessing, that enriched by Thy heavenly gift *he* may be able to attain to the grace of Thy majesty, and show forth to others an example of good living. Through, *etc.*

(*b*) *Episcopal Benediction at the Ordination of a Deaconess*

May Almighty God, by the intercession of His holy Virgins, grant you His blessing, He who hath willed to triumph over the ancient foe by means of women. Amen.

And may He Who hath willed to confer on them fruit an hundredfold, and the glory of virginity, and the strife of martyrdom, grant you cleansing from the filth of vice, and adornment with the lamps of virtue. Amen.

That with the oil of virtues the lamps of sinners may be so replenished, that with them ye may be able to enter the chamber of the heavenly bridegroom.

[1] This Pontifical is from a Paris MS. of cent. x. [Surtees Society, vol. xxvii. pp. 19 and 94.]

Which may He [grant, whose Kingdom, *etc.*]. Amen.

The Blessing [of God the Father, *etc.*].

C. Leofric Missal.[1] [Bishop of Exeter, 1050-1072 A.D.]

Service for the Making of a Deaconess

Hearken, O Lord, unto our prayers, *etc.*

(This is the same, *mutatis mutandis*, as one of the alternative collects for the ordination of a Deacon.)

[1] Contained in appendix to the Pontifical of Bainbridge (1508 A.D.).

APPENDIX C

CANONS OF COUNCILS WHICH MENTION DEACONESSES

I. *Council of Nicaea*, c. xix. (325 A.D.)

'Likewise also, touching the [ex-Paulianist] Deaconesses, and generally all who are reckoned on the clerical staff, the same standard is to be retained. And we have mentioned [the] Deaconesses, who are reckoned in the class (σχῆμα), since they have no imposition of hands, so that they are altogether reckoned among the laity.'

Dr Bright has the following note on this canon:—

'The third sentence is matter of much difficulty. Accepting the text περὶ τῶν διακονισσῶν—for the reading διακόνων found in Gelasius of Cyzicus, and followed by Philo and Evarestus, the Vetus and Isidore, has the look of a conjectural emendation, and introduces a puzzle of its own (which Hefele does not remove) by mentioning Deacons after clerics—we must first consider generally the office of Deaconesses. . . . The canon proceeds, 'Touch-

ing the [ex-Paulianist] Deaconesses, and generally all who are reckoned on the clerical staff (for this use of *κανόνι* see can. i.), the same standard is to be retained.' Here the word *τύπος* is used as synonymous with *ὅρος*, as Athanasius speaks of *τύποι*, meaning Church decrees. (Encycl. I., and see his Apol. c. Ari. 69.) Compare Eph. 8, and Routh, Rell. Sac. iii. 262. The special notion of the word is that of a pattern to be observed; and like *ὅρος* it is used in a dogmatic sense, as in the 'Type' of Constans II. It means a rite, in Basil, de Spir. Sanct. 74. Here the Council says in effect, 'What we have just laid down as to (ex-Paulianist) priests or deacons is to apply to deaconesses also, and to all who have held any official position within the sect.' But what of the next words, 'We have mentioned the Deaconesses,' etc.? The phrase *τῶν ἐν τῷ σχήματι ἐξεταστθεισῶν* has been variously rendered by Latin translators as 'in eadem specie,' 'in hoc ordine,' 'in eodem habitu,' 'in habitu' (as in later ritual terminology *σχῆμα* was used for the monastic habit, Goar, p. 489). It must be understood to mean 'in their visible status or rank of Deaconesses' (compare c. 8). But it is added that 'they have no sort of *χειροθεσία*.' Here the question arises, Were not then Deaconesses ordained with imposition of hands? S. Basil speaks of the body of a

Deaconess as consecrated (Epist. 199, 44); imposition of hands is prescribed in their case in Apost. Const. viii. 19, and is proved by Chalc. xv. to have been practised in the fifth century; compare the Constantinopolitan rite, already referred to, and the appointment of S. Rhadegund in Gaul by imposition of Bishop Medard's hands in 445 A.D. Hence it has been proposed (1) to distinguish between some Paulianist Deaconesses who were thus ordained, and others who had merely the σχῆμα (see Beveridge) of this female diaconate; (2) to assume that all Paulianist Deaconesses were appointed without imposition of hands; (3) to date the introduction of this ordination of Deaconesses, within the Church or outside it, after the Nicene era; (4) to say that the imposition of hands then received by Deaconesses was only a solemn benediction, as Hefele argues, adding that, according to can. 8 and the decree about the Meletians, 'the Nicene fathers took χειροθεσία as synonymous with mere benediction,' yet imputing to them by his argument the use of χειροθεσία in two senses, (*a*) a reconciling benediction, (*b*) ordination; for here it is said, 'they have no imposition of hands,' which he interprets as 'no proper ordination.' The opinion (2) seems simpler than either (1) or (3), and the wording favours it, as if special attention were called to

the fact that *Paulianist* Deaconesses had in no sense been ordained. The general purport of the passage may be stated thus: 'All ex-Paulianist officials, including Deaconesses, are to be dealt with by the method now prescribed. We mention these Deaconesses, however, merely as having been so regarded in their former sect. But in fact we refer to them *ex abundanti*, for they stand outside the class of persons whose 'ordination' is to be performed *de novo* after their conversion; they have never had any imposition of hands, so that these women must in all respects be reckoned among the laity."[1]

II. *Council of Chalcedon*, c. xv. (451 A.D.)

'A Deaconess is not to be ordained before the age of forty, and that with careful testing, and if, after having received ordination (χειροθεσία) and continued a time at her service, she shall give herself in marriage, doing despite to the grace of God, let such a one be anathematised with him that is joined unto her.'

III. *First Council of Orange*, c. xxvi. (441 A.D.)

'Deaconesses (diaconae) are on no account to be ordained. If any already exist, let them bow

[1] Dr Bright, *Canons of the first four General Councils*, with notes. 2nd edition, 1892.

their heads to the benediction which is given to the people.'

IV. *Council of Epaône*, c. xxi. (517 A.D.)

'The consecration of Widows, whom they call Deaconesses, we wholly abrogate from all our region; the benediction of penitence alone being laid upon them if they desire to be converted.'

V. *Second Council of Orleans*, c. xvii., xviii. (533 A.D.)

'Women who up to this time, contrary to the interdictions of the canons, have received the benediction of the Diaconate, if they are proved to have turned again to marriage, are to be expelled from communion; but if, when admonished by the Bishop, they recognise their error, and break off intercourse of this kind, they may return to the grace of communion, after having done penance.

'Moreover we determine, that to no woman hereafter shall the Diaconal benediction be entrusted, by reason of the frailty of this sex.'

VI. *Council in Trullo*, c. xiv., xlviii. (692 A.D.)

C. xiv. cites the decision that a Priest is to be ordained at thirty, a Deacon at twenty-five, and a Deaconess at forty.

'The wife of one who is advanced to the position of Bishop, being separated beforehand by consent from her husband, after he has been ordained to the Episcopate, shall enter a monastery, built at a distance from the Bishop's residence, and shall enjoy the support of the Bishop; moreover if she appear worthy, she may be advanced to the standing of the Diaconate.'

VII. *Council of Worms*, c. lxxiii. (868 A.D.)

It cites can. xv. of Chalcedon. This does not occur in the oldest MSS. and seems to be part of a Latin collection. (Mansi., vol. xv. p. 882.)

Other Councils which have been quoted as referring to Deaconesses are:—

α. *Council of Laodicea*, c. xi. (circa 372 A.D.)

Forbids the appointment of aged women (πρεσβύτιδας) or presiding women in the Church.

β. *Second Council of Tours*, c. xiii., xix. (567 A.D.)

Forbids the re-marriage of the wives of the clergy—'Episcopa, Presbytera, Diaconissa and sub-Diaconissa.' It also prohibits the benediction of Widows.

γ. *Council of Rome.* (721 A.D.)

Forbids the re-marriage of the wives of the clergy.

δ. *Sixth Council of Paris*, c. xlv. (829 A.D.)

Forbids women to approach the Altar or handle the sacred vessels.

ε. *Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua*, c. xi., xii., [erroneously cited as the Fourth Council of Carthage] probably sixth century.

Refers to dedicated Virgins and Widows.

APPENDIX D

MODERN ECCLESIASTICAL REGULATIONS RESPECTING DEACONESSES

A. EPISCOPAL ACTION IN ENGLAND

I. *The following 'Principles and Rules suggested for adoption in the Church of England' were drawn up in* 1871 *and signed by the two Archbishops and eighteen Bishops* [1]

1. General Principles

(*a*) *Definition of a Deaconess*

A Deaconess is a woman set apart by a Bishop, under that title, for service in the Church.

(*b*) *Relation of a Deaconess to a Bishop*

(1) No Deaconess, or Deaconess Institution, shall officially accept or resign work in a Diocese without the express authority of the Bishop of that Diocese, which authority may at any time be withdrawn.

(2) A Deaconess shall be at liberty to resign her commission as Deaconess, or may be deprived of it by the Bishop of the Diocese in which she is working.

[1] See above, p. 113 f.

(*c*) *Relation of a Deaconess to an Incumbent*

No Deaconess shall officially accept work in a parish (except it be in some non-parochial position, as in a Hospital or the like) without the express authority of the Incumbent of that parish, which authority may at any time be withdrawn.

(*d*) *Relation of a Deaconess to a Deaconess Institution*

In all matters not connected with the parochial or other system under which she is summoned to work, a Deaconess may, if belonging to a Deaconess Institution, act in harmony with the general rules of such Institution.

2. RULES SUGGESTED

(*a*) *Probation*

It is essential that no one be admitted as Deaconess without careful previous preparation, both technical and religious.

(*b*) *Dress*

A Deaconess should wear a dress which is at once simple and distinctive.

(*c*) *Religious Knowledge*

It is essential to the efficiency of a Deaconess

that she should maintain her habit of prayer and meditation, and aim at continual progress in religious knowledge.

(d) Designation and Signature

It is desirable that a Deaconess should not drop the use of her surname, and with this end in view it is suggested that her official designation should be '*Deaconess A. B.*' (Christian and Surname), and her official signature should be '*A. B. Deaconess.*'

P.S.—It is desirable that each Deaconess Institution should have a body of Associates attached to it for the purpose of general counsel and co-operation.

A. C. CANTUAR.
W. EBOR.
J. LONDON.
S. WINTON.
J. C. BANGOR.
A. C. BATH AND WELLS.
HARVEY CARLISLE.
W. CHESTER.
R. D. CHICHESTER.
E. H. ELY.
F. EXON.
C. J. GLOUCESTER AND BRISTOL.
J. HEREFORD.
G. A. LICHFIELD.
C. LINCOLN.
J. F. OXON.
W. C. PETERBOROUGH.
T. L. ROCHESTER.
G. SARUM.
C. ST DAVIDS.

II. *Resolutions passed by the Upper House of Canterbury Convocation. Feb.* 4, 1891 [1]

DEACONESSES

(1) That Deaconesses having, according to the best authorities, formed an order of ministry in the early Church, and having proved their efficiency in the Anglican Church, whenever the order has been revived, it is desirable to encourage the formation of Deaconess Institutions and the work of Deaconesses in our dioceses and parishes.

(2) That a Deaconess should be admitted in solemn form by the Bishop, with benediction, by the laying on of hands.

(3) That there should be an adequate term of preparation and probation.

(4) That a Deaconess so admitted may be released from her obligations by the Bishop, if he think fit, upon cause shown.

(5) That no Deaconess should be admitted to serve in any parish without a license from the Bishop of the diocese, given at the request of the incumbent or curate-in-charge.

(6) That the dress of Deaconesses should be simple but distinctive.

(7) That a Deaconess should not pass from

[1] See above, p. 114 f.

one diocese to another without the written permission of both Bishops.

(8) That special care should be taken to provide for every Deaconess sufficient time and opportunity for the strengthening of her own spiritual life.

III. *Extract from the Report presented by the Committee of the Lambeth Conference of* 1897 *on 'The Relation of Religious Communities to the Episcopate.'*[1]

We hail with thankfulness the revival of the ancient office of Deaconess, and note the increasing recognition of its value to the Church. No full statistical information is at present available as to the progress which has been made, or as to the variety of usage in different branches of our Communion. We have reason to expect that we shall have this information in a complete form before the preparation of our further report. In the meantime, it is our duty to call attention to certain principles, the neglect of which may easily injure and retard an organisation which we believe to be capable, by the blessing of God, of doing incalculable good.

(1) Care should be taken to prevent the applica-

[1] See above, p. 144 f.

tion, within the limits of our Communion, of the term 'Deaconess' to any woman other than one who has, in accordance with primitive usage, been duly set apart to her office by the Bishop himself. Half a century ago, when the official service of women in the Church was unrecognised, the ancient term Deaconess was frequently adopted, both within and without our Communion, as a convenient title, by Christian women given to good works, who did not thereby claim any position in the Church similar to that which belonged to the Deaconess of early days. If, however, the revival of the office is to be encouraged and its importance recognised, the accurate use of its title must be carefully guarded.

(2) Women thus set apart must first have been carefully trained, and tested as to their fitness for the office, and their purpose to devote their lives to its high calling. There are questions respecting the necessary qualifications for the office, the manner of setting apart a Deaconess, the nature of the specific obligations she assumes, and the form of license she should hold, which will be considered in our subsequent report. It will be necessary to deal also with the question of the rules to be observed when a Deaconess removes to another diocese from that in which she was set apart.

(3) Experience has already shown the possibility and the advantage of encouraging the development of Deaconess life and work upon two somewhat different lines—

(*a*) The Community life, corresponding more or less closely to that of a Sisterhood whose members are not Deaconesses; and

(*b*) The system of individual work under the Bishop's license, without necessary connection with any Community in the stricter sense of the word.

Upon this distinction we ask leave to report more fully hereafter, but we are anxious not to seem to discourage either of two systems, both of which appear to us to have been already blessed of God. It must, however, be understood that under whatever form of organisation, a Deaconess holds of necessity a direct and personal relation to her Diocesan Bishop.

(4) It is, in our opinion, eminently desirable to promote a closer approach to uniformity in the manner of setting apart and licensing Deaconesses in the various Dioceses of our Communion. Upon this point also we hope to speak more fully hereafter.

B. THE CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

[*From the Digest of the Canons of the General Convention*[1]]

CANON 10

OF DEACONESSES

AS AMENDED BY THE GENERAL CONVENTION, 1904

§ I. A woman of devout character and proved fitness, unmarried or widowed, may be appointed Deaconess by any Bishop of this Church. Such appointment shall be vacated by marriage.

§ II. The duty of a Deaconess is to assist the Minister in the care of the poor and sick, the religious training of the young and others, and the work of moral reformation.

§ III. No woman shall be appointed Deaconess until she shall be at least twenty-three years of age, nor until she shall have laid before the Bishop testimonials certifying that she is a communicant of this Church in good standing and that she possesses such characteristics as, in the judgment

[1] See above, p. 120 f.

of the persons testifying, fit her for at least one of the duties above defined. The testimonial of fitness shall be signed by two Presbyters of this Church, and by twelve lay communicants of the same, six of whom shall be women. The Bishop shall also satisfy himself that the applicant has had an adequate preparation for her work, both technical and religious, which preparation shall have covered the period of two years.

§ IV. No Deaconess shall accept work in a Diocese without the express authority, in writing, of the Bishop of that Diocese; nor shall she undertake work in a Parish without the like authority from the Rector of the Parish.

§ V. When not connected with a Parish, the Deaconess shall be under the direct oversight of the Bishop of the Diocese in which she is canonically resident. A Deaconess may be transferred from one Diocese to another by Letters Testimonial.

§ VI. A Deaconess may at any time resign her office to the Ecclesiastical Authority of the Diocese in which she is at the time canonically resident, but she may not be suspended or removed from office except by the Bishop for cause, with the consent of the Standing Committee, and after a hearing before the Bishop and the Standing Committee.

§ VII. No woman shall be recognised as a Deaconess until she has been set apart for that office by an appropriate religious service, to be prescribed by the General Convention, or, in the absence of such prescription, by the Bishop.

APPENDIX E

DIOCESAN DEACONESS INSTITUTIONS IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Diocese.	Founded.	Address.
[1] London (W.)	1861, by Bp. Tait.	St Andrew's Deaconess Home, Tavistock Cres., W.
[2] Ely	1869, by Bp. Harold Browne	Ely Diocesan Home, Bedford
[2] Salisbury	1875, by Bp. Moberly	91 Crane Street, Salisbury
Winchester	1879, by Bp. Harold Browne	St Andrew's Home, Portsmouth.
[1] London (E.)	1880, by Bp. Walsham How	All Saints' House, Church Cres., S. Hackney, N.E.
Rochester and Southwark	1887, by Bp. Thorold	113 North Side, Clapham Common, S.W.
Exeter	1890, by Bp. Bickersteth	The Chantry, Exeter
Llandaff	1893, by Bp. Lewis.	Llandaff Diocesan Deaconess Institution, Penarth
[3] Durham	1885, by Bp. Lightfoot	Diocesan Mission House, The College, Durham
Newcastle-on-Tyne	1905, by Bp. Lloyd	47 Leazes Terrace, Newcastle-on-Tyne

The training provided in these Institutions, details of which may in each case be obtained

[1] Rests on the double basis of a training home for Deaconesses and a sisterhood.

[2] Not a training centre.

[3] Not founded as a Deaconess Institution. First ordination took place in 1894.

from the Head Deaconess, includes theological study and instruction and experience in the various branches of pastoral and social work.

In 1909 an Association of Head Deaconesses was formed to facilitate closer relations between them, that there might be more concerted action, and that the standard required for Deaconesses, their training, and the ideals of their service might tend to greater uniformity.

In 1912 this Association arranged for the celebration of a Jubilee of the Revival of the Order in the English Church. The occasion is a memorable one in the history of the Order, and the following brief notice is added as a record of it. The proceedings began, on June 26th, with the reception of Deaconesses, their Bishops, and Wardens, by the Archbishop and Mrs Davidson at Lambeth Palace. The following morning, about 150 Deaconesses met together for their corporate communion, dedicating themselves for the first time as a Body to the service of the Church and her Master. The Archbishop was the Celebrant, and later in the day he delivered his Charge to the Deaconesses assembled in Lambeth Palace. In the afternoon a crowded meeting, arranged by the Central Council of Women's Work, was held in the big hall of the Church House. The Archbishop presided, and,

after his opening address, speeches were delivered by the Bishop of Winchester, the Dean of Wells, Deaconess Knapp, and the Bishop of London.[1] At the close of the meeting, by the request of the Archbishop, a few words were spoken by Deaconess Gilmore, formerly Head Deaconess of Rochester and Southwark, and one of the pioneers in the Revival of the Order. The meeting closed with the Benediction of the Primate: an assurance surely that the movement shall go forward under the Church's blessing.

[1] These speeches have been printed in a pamphlet (price 2d.), which may be obtained from the Head Deaconess, 113 North Side, Clapham Common, S.W. Other pamphlets on the Deaconess Order may be obtained from the same address.

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